ENDLESS QUEST® BOOKS
CRIMSON CRYSTAL
ADVENTURE
4
SALE PRICE
$ 50
394-74241-9 $2.95
STOP THAT WITCH!
by Mary Clark

Lift the CRIMSON CRYSTAL™ Screen at the top of the page and see what happens. The magic crystal disappears! Replace the screen, and the crystal reappears.

As you follow your adventure through this book, you will come across sections marked with ❖. Use your red screen on the picture indicated to see what secrets are revealed!

The CRIMSON CRYSTAL™ screen can either help or hinder you on your quest—you'll have to decide whether to take the risk. You could tumble headlong into a bottomless pit or be attacked by a vicious dragon . . . or become king. As in all ENDLESS QUEST® books, success or failure will be determined by your choices. Good luck!

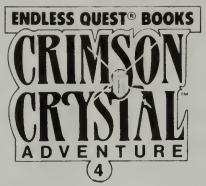
CRIMSON CRYSTAL™ Adventures:

1 Riddle of the Griffon

2 Search for the Pegasus

3 Renegades of Luntar

4 Stop That Witch!



STOP THAT WITCH!

by Mary Clark

A PICK A PATH TO ADVENTURE™ Book

Cover art by Keith Parkinson
Interior art by Mario D. Macari

TSR, Inc.
PRODUCTS OF YOUR IMAGINATION™

For Anne and Jeffrey
And in memory of Michael Carry

STOP THAT WITCH!
© 1985 TSR, Inc.
All Rights Reserved.

This book is protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction or other unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written permission of TSR, Inc.

Distributed to the book trade in the United States by Random House, Inc., and in Canada by Random House of Canada, Ltd.

Distributed in the United Kingdom by TSR UK, Ltd.
Distributed to the toy and hobby trade by regional distributors.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, and ENDLESS QUEST are registered trademarks owned by TSR, Inc.

CRIMSON CRYSTAL, PICK A PATH TO ADVENTURE, PRODUCTS OF YOUR IMAGINATION, and the TSR logo are trademarks owned by TSR, Inc.

First printing: September, 1985
Printed in the United States of America
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 85-51048
ISBN: 0-88038-251-1

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

All characters in this book are fictitious. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

TSR, Inc.
P.O. Box 756
Lake Geneva,
WI 53147

TSR UK, Ltd.
The Mill, Rathmore Road
Cambridge CB1 4AD
United Kingdom

You follow the faint trail of crushed grass and broken twigs through the forest and past the abandoned mine, to the spot where it disappears at the river's edge. Never fooled by a trick like that, though, you cross the river and pick up the trail again farther downstream.

Now you stand on a hillside overlooking a small settlement. The thatched huts below you look like part of a toy village, the people like the miniature figures Pebo, your Ranger Master, uses to demonstrate how to infiltrate enemy strongholds.

"Okay, Springer," you call softly to your hawk companion. "It's time. If we're going to find a way into the village, we need a closer look."

You take an old, worn coin out of your pocket and curl your fingers around it. As Springer lights on your shoulder, you brace yourself, for even though you've used the mysterious coin a number of times since you found it, the change its magic makes in you is still a bit unsettling.

One moment you're you—Hedge, a young ranger who's better than average at scouting, tracking, spying, and infiltrating—but then, as soon as Springer touches you, you're instantly part hawk, too.

Oh, you can't fly, and you don't have an overwhelming desire to chase down field mice, but your senses are suddenly keener, especially your sight. Everything that's too far away for your own eyes to see as anything more than tiny blurs now becomes sharp and clear—just as if you were

seeing through Springer's eyes.

The magic never lasts long, but somehow it's always just long enough.

❖ *Study the picture on the next page, then look at it through the Crimson Crystal sheet from the front of the book to see what difference using the magic coin while touching Springer makes to your vision.*

As soon as you are yourself again, you pocket the magic coin and laugh. The hawk flutters down to the ground. "I don't believe it! Did you see that, Springer? Pebo thinks he's going to keep us out of Halstyn with nobody but Thacker and old Simon as lookouts!"

"Of course I saw it," the hawk replies crossly. "I always see what you see when we use that . ·.·. that *coin*."

"Oh no," you moan. "You're not going to start up with that again, are you?" You glare at the hawk.

"I am, indeed," she scolds. "Hedge, my dear, Pebo's your Ranger Master, and he's spent four years setting up practice missions like this for you. Do you really think it's fair to let him go on believing you've been completing them all on your own?"

"Look, bird," you argue, "for the last year, Pebo's been saying I can track and scout and spy

Please turn to page 17.

"You have to try that scroll, Sparks," you say. "We need Pebo."

"I know," the cleric admits, "but you've seen what happens."

"Only when your concentration's broken. If that doesn't happen, you shouldn't have any problems, right?"

For the first time, Sparks looks at you with some hope in his eyes. "Do you really think so?"

You cross your fingers and say, "Of course. Why shouldn't I?"

"All right then, I'll do it." The cleric nods. "Pebo, you'll have to stand right next to me so the spell will include you."

As the chameleon leaps to Sparks's side, you and Springer move back. The cleric takes an old, yellowed scroll out of his backpack and begins to murmur the words on it.

To your relief and surprise, there are no fireworks this time. Instead, you feel a healing sense of calm develop around the cleric and Pebo.

"So far, so good," whispers the hawk.

You start to nod, but then a sound catches your attention. "Shhh! Someone's coming, and if it's someone who will upset Sparks—"

"Uh-oh," says the hawk. "Quick, my dear. The coin."

You hurriedly reach into your pocket.

❖ *Look at the picture on the next page through the Crimson Crystal to see if someone is coming toward you. Then turn to page 10.*

"Hurry!" you exclaim as soon as you can talk. "We've got to protect Sparks!"

"Forget that," Pebo's voice says, and you see that the chameleon has moved away from Sparks and into the trees. "His spell worked. C'mon, kid, we're heading for the swamp."

"The swamp!" you exclaim in horror. "But there are monsters in there—lizard men! They eat people!"

"My dears," Springer breaks in, "you'd best choose between the orcs coming through the woods and lizard men in the swamp, or the orcs'll be choosing what to do with you!"

"We don't have to choose either of them!" you exclaim. "We can hide!"

"Hide? Where?" Sparks cries.

"In the bushes, behind the rocks, anywhere!" you hiss.

Suddenly you realize the orcs are closer than you thought. You can hear their voices.

1) If you want to hide near where you are, turn to page 55.

2) If you prefer to follow Pebo into the swamp, turn to page 68.

"Glorwillam's waited this long—a few more minutes can't hurt," you say. "Let's make a quick search of this room, then go on to the Great Hall."

"But what if we get caught?" the cleric argues. "It'll take time to search carefully."

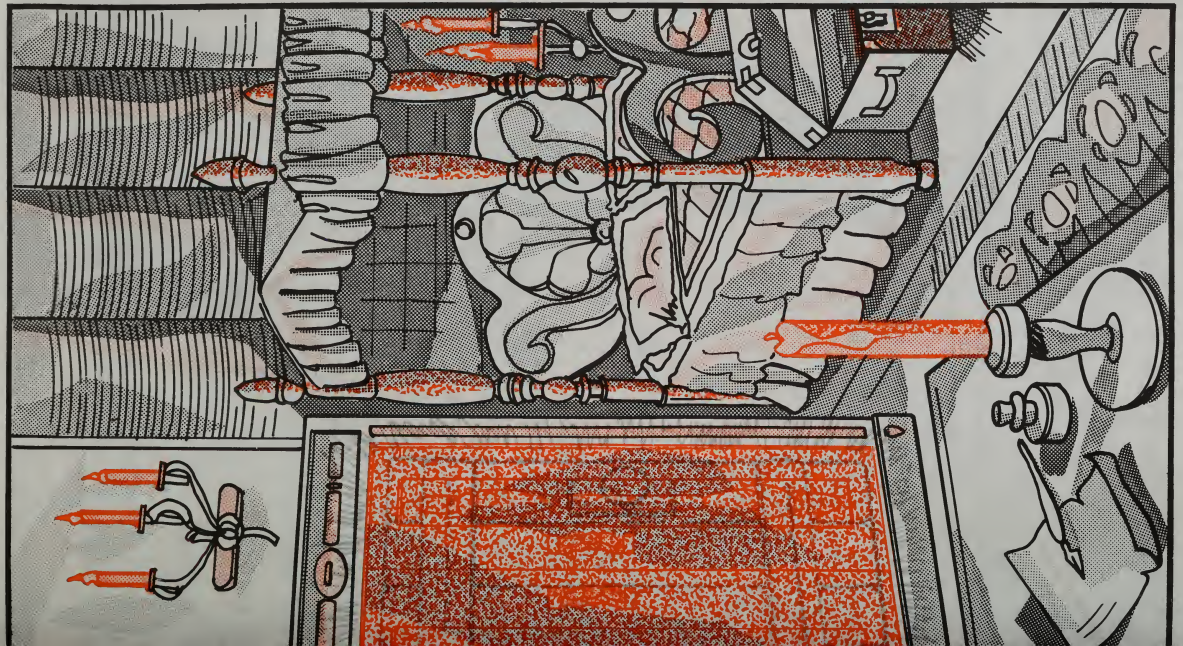
"Maybe not," you reply. "We could try using the coin, this time letting it combine my knowledge of where to look with both your ability to detect magic and Wynn's elven talent for finding secret doors. Doing that all at once should take a big chunk out of the time we'd need to search."

The elf nods and says, "Well, Ranger, I am willing to be part of such a search. Let us begin."

"What about you, Sparks?" you ask.

"Oh," Sparks moans, "I hate the weird feeling using the coin gives, Hedge . . . but if it'll get us out of here any faster, okay."

❖ *Look at the next page with the Crimson Crystal to search Carlynn's room with the help of the magic coin. Then turn to page 26.*



as well as any of the rangers in Halstyn, but he still won't let me hire out on any adventures. He says I need 'something special' that'll make me worth the hiring. Well, now I've got it," you say, patting your pocket. "Besides, you know I don't rely on the coin for scouting or tracking help. I do that all on my own."

"I guess that's true enough," the hawk admits, "but you do depend on it for spying, and, in case you haven't noticed, neither of us can move a muscle while the coin's working. I, for one, find that a rather dangerous little problem that makes me wonder if you should use that coin."

"C'mon, Springer," you say as you sit down under a tree, "why do you always have to look a gift horse in the mouth? Sure, maybe we do need more practice before we've figured out exactly how to use this coin, but that's one more reason for not telling Pebo about it right away. Just you wait and see—I bet we'll find lots of ways to use the coin."

"Just *you* wait," the hawk says, giving you a sharp look like an angry nursemaid, then flying to a branch above your head. "And don't make yourself too comfortable there. We've been on this tracking assignment all morning, and I'm ready to end it. I'm hungry."

"You're always hungry," you reply. "As for going home now—not a chance! Pebo'd want to know how we finished up so soon, and I've already told you I'm not ready to explain about the coin, not yet."

You laugh to yourself as you listen to the grumbling noises Springer makes while she settles herself in the tree above you. Then, daydreaming about your first adventure when you know you'll finally prove yourself, you close your eyes and drift off to sleep—never dreaming that that adventure is about to start.

Please turn to page 35.

"Pebo, I know I owe you a lot, but this is all too much for me," you protest. "With more help, maybe. Yeah, maybe with a party of fighters from Trymn we could—"

"Uh, Hedge, excuse me," the cleric interrupts. "I'm afraid there won't be any help coming from Trymn. Carlynn's turned them all into . . . into hedgehogs."

"Nice!" you exclaim, rolling your eyes skyward. "Look, Pebo, if all of them couldn't do anything to stop Carlynn, I sure can't! I'm leaving here now!"

You turn to go, but you're stopped by a ring of assorted lizards around your feet.

"Hedge," the chameleon says, "you've got to help us out. You don't want to spend the rest of your life wondering if every lizard your hawk eats used to be a friend, do you?"

You look at the lizards huddled around your feet, and behind their wide, unblinking eyes, you can see an almost-human look of pleading.

All at once, you know the only answer you can give.

"No," you say. "I guess I don't."

Please turn to page 39.

Hidden by the shadows inside the hut, you stand beside the open door and peer out. You see someone in a long, hooded cleric's robe coming down the village lane. Your eye is caught by a large medallion hanging on a chain around his neck. The figure stops near Pebo's hut and looks over the deserted village. You can hear him sigh.

Taking a deep breath, you raise your sword and step out, demanding, "Who are you? Tell me your business here and be quick about it!"

The figure's head snaps up, and the hood falls back. He's a boy! —and a nervous-looking one at that. At first, there's a hopeful look on his face as he inspects you, but it quickly turns to disappointment.

"I am Kor-Kiran, apprentice cleric to the Patriarch Glorwillam," he mumbles, "and my business here no longer matters. She has already been here and done her worst."

You move closer and demand, "Who's been here? What's been done? Speak up or . . . or I promise you'll feel the sting of my blade!"

The cleric, however, doesn't answer. Ignoring your sword, he begins waving his hands in the air and pointing at you in a very odd manner.

To your surprise, your sword begins slipping out of your hand, and your head starts feeling very light and fuzzy.

"Hey!" you shout. "What are you do—"

Next thing you know, sparks are exploding all around you, and the air is filled with the smell of rotting eggs.

But, surprisingly, you're all right.

"Good going!" you grumble sarcastically as you pinch out a few smoldering spots in your clothing. "What kind of spell was that?"

"It's your own fault!" the young cleric replies. "You—you broke my concentration!"

"That's not half what I'll break if you don't start explaining!" you warn. "And don't try any more of that funny stuff, 'Sparks.' Just say what you know plain and clear."

"My name is Kor-Kiran, not Sparks," the boy snaps, "and why I should tell you anything?"

"Look," you say, using a handful of the cleric's robe to haul him to his feet, "until you can work your spells without setting people on fire, you're 'Sparks,' and 'Sparks' you'll stay! Got it?" You try to look ferocious.

As the cleric cringes back and slowly nods, you're sorry you were so rough with him. "Look," you say, lowering your sword, "I'm Hedge, and my master's the Ranger Lord here. Why don't you tell me what you want, and when Pebo gets back, I'll—"

"He—he won't be back," the cleric stammers, cringing again as if he expects you to get mad. "No one will. They're—they're all still here."

Puzzled, you put away your sword and look around. Cows, horses, chickens, and lizards—everything looks normal. "I think you've gotten too close to one of your own spells."

"Think what you want," the cleric says, sighing as if nobody ever believes him. "But it's true.

Carlynn came here as that red dragon and turned everyone into lizards."

"Right!" you sneer. "Next, you'll tell me the chameleon in that hut is really Pebo himself. Besides, who's Carlynn?"

Sparks looks through the doorway of the hut, studies the lizard a moment, then rushes into excited speech. "Carlynn's a p-powerful, evil sorceress, a witch really, who's set herself up in a castle on the other side of Trymn. She's been demanding that every town within miles of her castle give her all their gold. If they don't, she turns the whole town into whatever creatures she chooses." Suddenly his confidence ebbs and he mumbles, "M-my master and I were trying to stop her."

"Where is your master?" you ask.

"Carlynn's holding him prisoner in a Mirror-of-Life Trapping. I came here hoping *your* master would help me free mine and—"

"Hold it!" you say. "If all that's true, why weren't you trapped, too?"

The cleric blushes. "You've seen what happens when I get nervous. Glorwillam had me stay back while he went to seek Carlynn."

"Smart move!" you think to yourself. Then whatever you might have said next is stopped short by a very familiar voice.

"Dragons! Nasty beasts! They certainly put a crimp in one's hunting."

Turning toward the voice, you see Springer on the windowsill of Pebo's hut. Both relieved and

angry, you plant your hands on your hips as you exclaim, "Well! Where've you been? How many times do I have to tell you—"

"Nice to see you again, too, my dear," the hawk replies, ignoring your anger. "That miserable dragon chased off everything worth tasting. Hmmmm—or did it?"

Seeing Springer hungrily eyeing the chameleon, you warn, "Don't even think it! This cleric says all these lizards in the village are actually Pebo and the others."

The hawk studies the chameleon more closely. "Too bad we can't tell for sure. That one looks tasty."

"No lizard for you. But I might have something here," you say, quickly shoving your hands in your pockets.

"Uh, excuse me," Sparks interrupts, and just as he taps you on the shoulder, your hand touches the coin in your pocket.

All at once, you feel the coin's magic working again. But instead of the keener eyesight you get using it with Springer, you have an overwhelming feeling that you can see the truth in everything—even if the truth is hidden by a lie or is masked by a magic spell.

❖ *Turn to page 11 and use the Crimson Crystal to discover what the magic coin reveals about the scene in Pebo's hut. Then turn to page 44.*

The elf is another woman in disguise all right, probably Carlynn, but it does you little good to know that now.

While you are still held motionless by the power of the coin, you hear the woman laugh—a cold, humorless laugh that sends chills up and down your spine. Then you see her reach out her arm and point a long finger at you.

Almost at once, the witch seems to be turning into a giant before your eyes. But then you feel your belt and sword slip from your waist, and looking down, you see that your clothes have suddenly become way too big for you. With a shiver, you realize that the witch hasn't been growing at all. You've been shrinking!

A moment later, you climb out from underneath the pile of fabric that used to be your clothing and find that you've not only shrunk to an alarmingly small size, but you've changed as well! A soft, light brown fur now covers your body, and behind you twitches a short, stubby little tail!

Not quite sure what's happened, you look to Sparks for an answer. When you see a chipmunk climbing out from under his clothes, you know: the witch has just added two more specimens to the menagerie of fighters, rangers, and clerics who did their best to try and stop her.

THE END

"Did you see that!" you exclaim. "There's a secret door in that wardrobe."

"And there's magic behind it," says Sparks. "I could see it clear as day. Couldn't you, Wynn?"

But Wynn doesn't answer. She's already running her fingers along the side of the wardrobe. "Sometimes there is a trick to this, and sometimes there isn't," she says softly. "Ah, no tricks here!" She touches what looks like just a nail, and the door pops open.

Inside lies a small golden globe resting on a velvet pillow.

"Criminy!" you whisper. Then after a moment, you reach out to gently pick up the metal sphere and study it more closely. "What do you suppose this thing is?" you ask. As you finish your question, the orb suddenly seems to come alive in your hands. It glows and vibrates. Then it speaks:

> "Broken from the Staff of Power
> By treachery and deceit
> Our strength is in the splintered rod
> That lies at Carlynn's feet."

Startled, your first impulse is to throw the small sphere as far away from you as you can, but Sparks stops you.

"Don't, Hedge!" he says quickly. "I've seen orbs like this before, and it really belongs on a magic staff - on the top, in fact. Here, look." Taking the golden sphere out of your hands, the cleric gently

turns it over until he finds the spot where it had once been attached to a wooden staff. "Hmmm," he murmurs. "It has indeed been snapped off. Look, the wood is splintered."

Taking the sphere back, you study it yourself. "You're right, Sparks," you say. "I wonder where the rest of the staff is."

"Good question," says Springer. "If this globe and its staff belong to Carlynn, why hasn't she put them back together? Why leave them lying around broken apart?"

"Perhaps the orb has already given us the answer," says Wynn. "Perhaps she who possesses the orb is not really Carlynn."

"C'mon, Wynn," you exclaim. "If Carlynn's not Carlynn, then who is she?"

The golden orb begins to vibrate as it again answers your question. "An apprentice with more cunning than wisdom. The real mistress of this castle—weakened by the breaking of the Staff of Power—is being held prisoner by the imposter. Once restored, the whole staff can give Carlynn strength enough to do what your touch tells me you mean to do. Let me take you to my mistress so the staff can be made one again."

Startled, you look first at Sparks, then at Wynn. The cleric looks as confused as you, but the elf is staring at the orb with avid interest in her eyes.

"I would let it take us to Carlynn," she says. "Who but the true sorceress could best defeat her imposter?"

"*If* the globe is telling the truth," Springer says. "My dears, this could all be an elaborate trick."

"Oh, that's true," Sparks says. "Hedge, I think we'd best not take any chances. Let's go find Glorwillam right now! Let him handle it."

1) If you agree with Sparks that you should find Glorwillam, turn to page 60.

2) If you think Wynn's idea of letting the globe take you to Carlynn is best, turn to page 32.

With Springer on your shoulder and Sparks and Wynn behind you, you lead the way down the dark staircase. It's a narrow passageway, and it seems to grow even darker the farther you descend.

Every now and again, you think you hear a voice or voices coming through the stone walls, so you assume the door you saw when you used the coin must be close. But no matter how far you go, you never seem to reach it.

"Hedge?" Sparks's soft voice seems very loud in the silence. "I don't like this. These stairs aren't getting us anywhere."

"They're getting us somewhere all right," Springer grumbles. "But they're getting there without me! Sorry, my dears, but this is where we part company. I'm going back up."

"Springer!" you shout as the hawk takes to the air. "Wait! We're coming with you!"

Suddenly, a horrible laugh rings through the passage and the stairs beneath your feet flatten into a steep, slick chute.

As you and your friends plummet through the darkness, you wonder if the chute will drop you in a place where you will find a way to finish your quest, or if this will be

THE END

Shivering, wet, and remembering the steep drop down the mountainside you saw on your flight to the castle, you say, "Since we're here, let's take a look at this trapdoor."

Gathering around the small wooden door, you all study it carefully before you decide it might be safe enough to open. Then, taking hold of the huge iron ring fastened to it, you lift the door open just a crack. Nothing happens, so you slowly swing it all the way open.

Staring down into darkness, you can see the beginning of a stairway, but you can't tell where it goes or how far.

"Even with my infravision, I cannot see where it ends," says Wynn, "but I am limited to only a few yards. I certainly wish I could see farther, so that we might be warned of any danger."

At that, your eyes meet Springer's, and even though she doesn't say a word, you know the hawk's thinking exactly what you are.

"Well, maybe we can do something about that," you say. Taking your magic coin out of our pocket, you continue, "Wynn, I know that by using this coin's powers, Springer and I could see all the way down to the bottom of this stairway . . . that is, of course, if we only had enough light to see by, or—"

"Or if you had infravision," the elf says, nodding as she finishes the thought for you. "Master Ranger, I hope for the success of this quest just as much as you. What must I do to add my special sight to yours?"

"It's very simple really," you say. "Just stand here next to me and take my hand."

❖ *Turn to page 14 and see what the three-way link of hawk, elf, and ranger reveals through the Crimson Crystal.*

"Well," asks Sparks anxiously, "what did you see?"

"There's a door at the bottom of these stairs," you reply. "Other than that, there's nothing down there."

"Well, what do you think?" the cleric asks further. "Should we try it?"

"My dears," says Springer, "a deep, dark hole is never to be trusted."

"Perhaps," Wynn agrees. "Still, it does seem a safer way to enter than the window."

"Hedge," says Sparks, "I don't like this trapdoor, but I don't like the idea of going down the wall to use the window, either. But whichever way you choose, I'll go."

1) If the stairway seems safe enough, turn to page 29.

2) If the dark stairway makes you uneasy and you'd rather try the window, turn to page 52.

Holding the golden orb in your hands, you command, "Take us to your mistress."

Instantly, the room begins to spin. When it stops, you and your friends are in a dark cell containing only a straw bed and a table holding a small, flickering candle.

"Where—where are we?" the stunned cleric whispers.

"Beats me," you reply. "But wherever it is, it sure is spooky."

"You—you don't suppose the orb lied, do you?" the cleric asks. "Maybe it dumped us right into Carlynn's dungeon!"

"Hardly," Wynn answers after making a quick survey of the room. "The door is open, and there are no locks or bolts on it."

"But, my dear, this must be some sort of dungeon cell. The orb said the imposter was holding Carlynn prisoner," Springer reminds you.

"Prisons come in all shapes," says a frail old voice. "And some are of our own choosing."

Startled, you whirl around to see an old woman moving out of the shadows.

She is wearing fine clothing, but it hangs on her loosely, as if it belonged on a different body. In the pale candlelight, her long gray hair wreaths her face like a silver halo. In one hand is a broken staff.

"Carlynn?" you wonder aloud.

"Yes, Ranger," the woman replies. "That is what the golden orb promised you, is it not?"

"My dear, promises and magic don't always go hand in hand," Springer says, eyeing the woman suspiciously over her beak. "If you're really Carlynn, what're you doing here instead of trying to stop the witch that's causing so much trouble in your name?"

"When the imposter first challenged me, the Staff of Power was broken." The fire of anger enters the old woman's voice. "She took the golden orb—the mind, the soul of the staff—but I escaped with its life—the splintered shaft you see here in my hand. Since then, I have indeed been trying to stop her. I have kept myself hidden in the darkest shadows of my own castle, waiting for the time someone could take the orb away from her and bring it back to me."

"Well, this is your lucky day, Carlynn!" you exclaim. "We've got it right here."

"Yes, I know," Carlynn says. "But you have *her* with you as well."

"Her?" Sparks asks. "You—you mean the imposter?"

"But that's impossible," says Springer. "There's only Hedge, me, the cleric, and the elf."

"Yes," Carlynn says. "The elf."

"Me?" Wynn cries. "Don't be silly! I've done nothing but help all along."

"Of course you have, Jenna," Carlynn says. "You could only find me through the orb—and it would not speak to you!"

"Criminy! You don't mean—"

"Yes!" the old woman exclaims. "This elf is the

witch you have meant to stop. Here, fit the golden orb on the top of my staff, and you shall know the truth at once!"

"No! Don't!" cries Wynn. "It's a trick, Hedge! She must be the imposter! Give the orb to me, Hedge! Please! Don't restore the staff while it is in her hands!"

Your own hands tighten around the sphere as you wonder which of the women standing before you is telling the truth, which of them you ought to trust.

"Hedge," Sparks whispers, taking a firm hold on your arm. "The answer's in—in your pocket."

Use the coin? Now?

If you do, with Sparks's ability to see through magic, you will certainly be able to tell whether Wynn is actually an elf or the imposter. But while you're using the coin, you and Sparks would be at the mercy of . . . of whom? Carlynn? Wynn? A witch named Jenna?

On the other hand, if you and Sparks don't use the coin, how will you know whom to trust with the golden orb?

1) If you want to risk using your magic coin, turn to page 114.

2) If you decide it's too dangerous to use your magic coin, turn to page 71.

A cold chill startles you awake.

Even though you were soundly asleep, your ranger's training puts your sword already in your hand when you sit up to look around.

At first glance, everything seems normal. When you keep very still and listen carefully, you can't hear anything unusual.

"But something's wrong," you think. "I've never felt this weird chill before . . . and the sun's still shining!"

"Hey, Springer, can you see anything from up there?" But looking up, you see that your flying companion is no longer in the tree above you!

"Springer?" you call softly. "Hey, bird! This is no time for hide-and-seek! Where are you? Springer! Gone off to catch yourself a snack, have you?" you mutter crossly. "Well, you've just flunked guard-bird training, and that's a fact! Just you wait till—"

Without warning, the same cold chill that woke you hits you again, and you freeze. Every nerve in your body tells you something terrible is close by. You stand stock-still and wait, shivering as you sense a frightful presence approaching.

From somewhere above and behind you comes a heavy throbbing, like the beating of giant, slow-moving wings, and the sky begins to turn dark. Then a cold black shadow spreads over you. Looking up, you gasp. Gliding slowly overhead, blocking out the sun, is an immense red dragon!

You want to run, but you're held motionless by

a great fear. You see light glint off the great beast's scales, and as it swoops in your direction, your eyes widen at the sight of its vicious, dripping fangs.

Your heart skips a beat, for the dragon begins a circling descent, like you've seen Springer make when going after some small animal. But the dragon's target is Halstyn—your village!

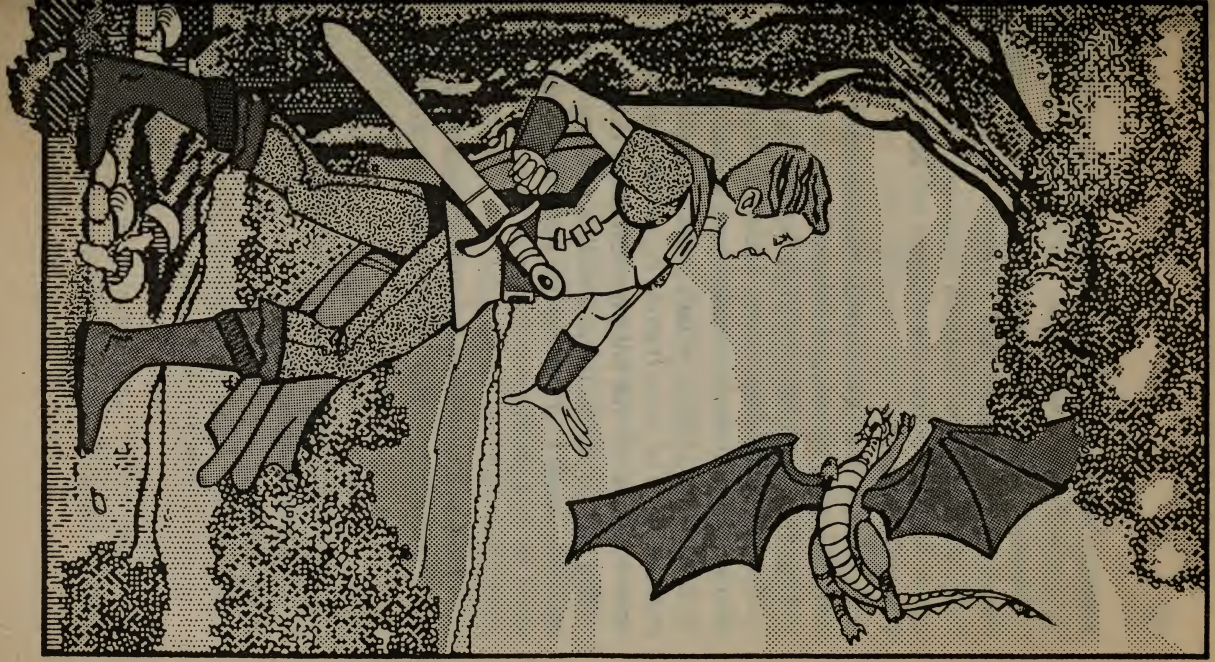
Using everything Pebo taught you about concentration, you force your feet to move in spite of the chilling dragon-fear. Then you start running.

Before you reach the village, the dragon lets out a terrible, piercing wail that stuns you motionless again. When you recover, the dragon is gone, and everything seems back to rights—everything except the sick, frightened feeling churning in your stomach.

Drawing on all you've learned about moving unnoticed through the woods, you reach Halstyn's outskirts. There you pause, sword in hand, to take careful stock of what you see.

To your surprise, there are no signs of a dragon attack—no fire or acid scorches, no ice. In fact, Halstyn looks so much like it did when you left this morning you begin to wonder if you imagined the dragon. As you pass your friends' huts, you call out their names . . . but no one answers, and no one comes. Except for a few cows, horses, and chickens, and lots of lizards, the village of Halstyn is deserted.

When you finally open the door to your Ranger Master's hut, you see only a large chame-



leon sitting in the middle of the cushion on Pebo's favorite chair.

You try to calm your growing panic and think. Finally you reason, "Of course! They must've been warned, and they all took off for Pebo's secret hideout before the dragon got here! So all I've got to do is—"

Suddenly, a sound outside catches your attention. It's coming toward Pebo's hut.

Your first impulse is to duck out the back door and head for Pebo's secret hideout. But something holds you back, makes you wonder if you shouldn't stay to see what's coming. After all, it could be one of your friends or, at the very least, someone who could tell you about the dragon.

You can hear the whatever-it-is coming closer by the second, and you realize you have to decide what to do quickly.

1) If you decide to stay put and see what you can learn from whatever is approaching, turn to page 20.

2) If you want to head for the secret hideout, turn to page 43.

You and the others quickly prepare for your journey to Carlynn's castle. You wear the suit of lightweight leather armor Pebo recently gave you, and you carry a shortsword at your side. In your backpack are some things Pebo couldn't carry himself.

Though you offered him weapons, Sparks refused them, saying he would use only the sling and stones that he carries in a sack tied to his belt.

Soon, you are following the cleric through the forest, and even though it's late afternoon, there aren't enough shadows to keep you from noticing that Pebo isn't changing colors as all good chameleons should.

"Hey, Pebo, I thought chameleons were supposed to turn colors according to the background," you say. "You should be green, like the grass, not gray. Is something wrong?"

"Don't know," Pebo answers. "I've felt pretty rotten ever since we left Halstyn, but then I've never been a lizard before. Maybe this is how lizards feel."

"I—I'm afraid it's not," Sparks says. "It's probably be—because of the spell Carlynn puts around any town she's transformed, a spell to keep any of her victims from—from leaving to look for help."

"Great!" you exclaim, angrily. "Why didn't you say anything about this before?"

"I wasn't sure—"

"Hold it!" Pebo interrupts. "Look, you two. I'm feeling worse by the minute. If Sparks is onto something here, we've got to know."

At once, you reach into your pocket and take out your magic coin. "This let us see through one of Carlynn's spells before," you say. "Maybe Sparks and I can use its powers again to see if there's a spell around Halstyn."

"Me? Why—why does it have to be me?" the cleric stammers. "If the coin's magic, why can't you use it with the hawk, or with Pebo?"

"Because neither of them's a cleric," you reply. "This is a job for someone with more knowledge of spells than either of them has."

"Oh," Sparks moans, "I was afraid you'd say that. Well, I—I guess I can do it if it'll help free Glorwillam . . . "

With that, he takes a deep breath and holds out his hand to you.

❖ *Use the magic coin to look at page 15 and see if the countryside around the village has been put under a spell.*

"There's a spell all right. It's like a spiderweb going between the trees," you say.

"Lucky for us we've got Sparks then," says Pebo. "The only way to get through one spell is with another."

"Wait a minute!" Sparks exclaims. "I'm only a vicar! I don't know enough yet to dispel *this* kind of magic!"

"He's right," you jump in, not relishing another sample of the cleric's fireworks. "There's got to be another way."

"Like what? " Springer asks. "Pebo's turning grayer by the minute. Unless you want to leave him behind in the village, he has to have the help of a cleric's spell."

"Well then, what about it, Sparks?" you ask after a moment. "If you can't break the spell, can you at least get Pebo past it?"

Sparks thinks a minute, then shakes his head nervously and turns to avoid your eyes.

"You can't!" you exclaim, horrified.

"Well, yes," the cleric mumbles. "I—I have a Scroll of Protection that might get Pebo past the spell, but . . . but I've never used a scroll before. If—if I g-get nervous . . . "

The thought of being caught up in another of Sparks's failures isn't pleasant. But your only other choice is to leave Pebo behind.

1) You decide to get Sparks to use the Scroll of Protection, even though you don't know if it will work. Turn to page 8.

2) You think it would be best to leave Pebo behind. Turn to page 46.

Remembering that Sparks's spells don't always work, you say, "If Waldo can get past these toads, we can, too. Just stay close and be very, very careful."

Not quite as sure about this as you, your friends reluctantly agree to follow you. At first, it seems your plan is working, for you are able to dodge in and out among the stalactites and stalagmites until all of you are only a few steps from the corridor leading out of the cavern. But just as you get ready to make a final dash for it, Sparks knocks loose a stone which clatters across the chamber floor.

Instantly, you draw your sword—and with good reason. You and your party are suddenly surrounded by giant toads!

Fighting the toads is one option, of course, but there are a lot of the creatures, and they're awfully big. The alternative is the same as you had before: you can let Sparks try talking to them.

1) If you choose to fight the toads, turn to page 97.

2) If you'd rather let Sparks try talking to them, turn to page 112.

"Why take chances?" you think. "If the secret hideout's good enough for everyone else, it's good enough for me!"

You go to the back door of the hut and hurry through the forest. You don't meet anyone along the way, but that doesn't surprise you because you know Pebo gave everyone a different route to take. You are surprised, though, when you reach the hideout and find no one there. Still, you decide not to worry. The others are sure to show up soon.

As you settle down to wait, afternoon fades into evening, and evening becomes night. When morning comes and you are still alone, you hurry back to your village.

When you get there, you discover that all the animals have left Halstyn, too—even the lizards. All you can find that might be a clue to what happened is an old, blank scroll lying on the ground near Pebo's favorite chair, and beside it, a hawk's tail feather.

As you pick up the two items, you wonder what finding them here together could possibly mean. Could they have something to do with what happened to your friends and to Pebo? And where is Springer?

Unfortunately, the blank piece of parchment can't tell you, and chances are, you may never really know.

THE END

As soon as the coin's magic fades and you're yourself again, you shout, "Pebo! It *is* you!"

"Nobody but."

Hardly able to believe what's just happened, you look from the chameleon to the cleric and back again. "But I saw you! Right through Carlynn's spell and—and—Hey! Hey, Pebo! You can talk!"

"Sure, I can." Pebo laughs. "If a dragon can turn a man into a lizard, anything's possible. Right?"

"I—I guess so. But why didn't you speak up before?"

"Wouldn't have had a chance to see what you can do then, would I?" the chameleon says as he plops down off the chair and walks toward you. "You know, kid, you deserve a nice long lecture about keeping tricks like that magic coin from me, but there isn't time, and frankly, I couldn't care less. What matters is, now I'm sure you're the one to get me out of this mess."

"Me? You'd trust *me*?"

"C'mon, Hedge," the lizard replies. "If you were faced with eating flies the rest of your life, wouldn't you get help wherever you could?"

The thought turns your stomach. "I guess so," you say. "But what can I do?"

"Help this cleric free his master, of course."

With everything happening so fast, you'd almost forgotten about Sparks. You look at him now and see that his accidental introduction to the powers of your magic coin has obviously left

him even more unsure of you than he was before.

"Give me a break, Pebo," you protest. "He's already tried to set me on fire once! Besides, his own master didn't trust him enough to take him along when he challenged the witch."

"And that was probably where he went wrong," Pebo says. "Evil ones like Carlynn look for obvious power because that's all they understand. She won't be expecting a serious challenge from an inexperienced ranger and a timid little cleric."

You now suspect that being turned into a lizard may have seriously messed up Pebo's mind. What bothers you, though, is that you have a nagging feeling he just may be right.

1) If everything that's happened so far convinces you that this adventure is really much more than you can handle, even with help from Sparks, Pebo, and Springer, turn to page 19.

2) If, in spite of everything, you are ready to take up the challenge and go after the witch, turn to page 39.

Beckoning the chameleon away from the others, you say, "I'm afraid we've got to go on without you, Pebo. Sparks is even more nervous now than he was before. He could set fire to the whole forest trying to use that scroll."

"Nonsense," Pebo replies. "All he needs is a little confidence."

"Sure, but who's got the time to give it to him? You've gone from gray to nearly white. We've got to find Glorwillam and get you changed back before it's too late."

"You may have a point," the chameleon admits. "Well then, if I can't go with you, I can at least send you off with some help. Do you still have that sack I gave you to carry for me?"

"Yep. It's in my backpack. Why?"

"There's a Rope of Climbing in it. I know it's not much, but it may come in handy."

All at once, you realize your Ranger Lord is not only sending you off on your first adventure, but he's showing enough confidence in you to put his own fate in your hands.

For a split second, you wonder if you really are ready to go out on your own, but with a confident smile, you say, "Thanks, Pebo. And don't worry—we'll get you back to your old self."

Soon you are heading through the forest again, with Springer flying overhead and Sparks leading the way.

"I don't like this," you say after a while. "The forest is too quiet. I'd feel a lot better if we'd run into an orc or two."

The cleric nods. "At least then we'd know what Carlynn has planned for us. It's not knowing if or when or how she might show up herself that bothers me."

"You mean she could come back as that dragon again?"

Sparks shrugs. "That or anything else. Some say it's a natural ability, but I think it's the crystal she wears. In any case, she's a shape-changer, and that's a fact."

"Then I'm not too keen on spending the night here. Mad Waldo's place isn't far—"

"Mad Waldo? Who's that?" Sparks exclaims.

"An old hermit," you reply. "Calm down—he's not really mad, just a little . . . unpredictable."

"That's the understatement of the century!" exclaims Springer. "My dear, you know Waldo doesn't take to strangers very quickly. He might shelter *us,* but—"

"But he might not shelter Sparks," you finish. "Well, I guess it comes down to this: do we take our chances with Waldo or do we take them right here?"

1) If you decide to risk spending the night in the forest, turn to page 126.

2) If you'd rather take your chances with Mad Waldo, turn to page 104.

With Sparks riding in front of you and Wynn, riding on her magic spell, flying alongside, you glide through the air on Springer's back, watching the countryside pass below. Eventually, there looms the steep, rocky mountain topped by Carlynn's castle.

Even at a distance, you can see that it's a dark and forbidding place. Its base is cut right into the top of the mountain, and its jagged stone walls reach high up into a heavy blanket of storm clouds that rumble with the threat of rain.

In just a few minutes, you are stepping from Springer's back onto the slick slate tiles of the barren castle roof.

"Nice place," you say with a shiver. "Now what?"

"We must find a way in," answers the elf. "All castles have at least one way onto the roof. We need only to find it."

Just then a bright bolt of lightning flashes, and thunder rolls through the sky around you.

"Let's get started, my dears. It's beginning to rain," says Springer. "You three search the rooftop. I'm going to take a fly-around and see if there's a window or something along one of these walls. That is, if Master Sparks will be so good as to take this spell off me and get me back to my right size. I'm not likely to go unnoticed the way I am."

"I'm sorry, Springer," the cleric replies, hanging his head, "but—but I c-can't do that."

The hawk glares at Sparks through narrowed

eyes. "Why not? You don't mean I'm stuck like this forever, do you?"

"Oh, no!" the cleric answers quickly. "It's just that this spell has to sort of . . . well, wear off all by itself. But it won't be much longer now, I promise."

"You'd better hope so," the hawk grumbles, and with a disgusted grunt, she takes off into the sky.

Finding a way into Carlynn's castle would have been tricky at best, but the cold, misting rain that now starts to fall only adds to your troubles.

Shivering and wet, your party explores the roof carefully but finds no entrance. In fact, you are about ready to give up when Sparks trips and falls over an iron ring fastened to a wooden door in the stone roof.

"Good for you, Sparks!" you exclaim. "You found it—a trapdoor!"

"Find something, did you, my dears?" Springer observes from the sky above you, and as she comes in to land on your shoulder, you realize that she's back to her normal size again.

"Sparks did," you reply, nodding toward the door at your feet. "What about you? Did you see anything?"

"For what it's worth," the hawk answers, "there's a window some way down the eastern wall. I couldn't see what it opens on to, but it's there if you want to use it."

"Use it!" you exclaim. "Bird, would we want to risk scaling a wall in the rain when we've got this trapdoor right here?"

"Hedge," the cleric says quietly, "remember what I told you when we first met? Carlynn's a nasty one, and full of tricks besides. We haven't found any monsters guarding this roof, but I can guarantee you—something *is*."

You know Sparks has a point. The trapdoor could indeed be a *trap* door with monsters hidden behind it, or it could be set with blades or poison needles. Then again, it could be just what it seems—a convenient way into Carlynn's castle.

1) If you wish to use the trapdoor that's right in front of you, turn to page 30.

2) If you want to give the window a try, turn to page 52.

"I agree with Sparks. I don't like the looks of this place one bit. Let's check out Springer's window," you say. "If nothing else, no one will be expecting us to go that way." And leading your party to the edge of the roof, you peer down through the rain and mist.

"It's—it's a long way down," the cleric says.

"Criminy, Sparks!" you exclaim. "Make up your mind, will you? The trapdoor and this window are the only two ways in. Do you want to rescue Glorwillam or not?"

"Of course I want to rescue Glorwillam, but—but I didn't realize how far down the window is," the cleric complains. "Springer and Wynn can fly to get down there, but how are *we* going to make it to the window?"

Even though he can be a real pain sometimes, Sparks always does manage to ask just the right questions. How, indeed, are you and he to make it to the window.

"Pebo's Rope of Climbing!" you exclaim after a moment. Opening your backpack, you take out the long, slender rope and let it down over the edge of the roof.

"There," you say. "This'll get us as far as the window."

"Are—are you sure?" Sparks asks. "This rope looks awfully thin."

Taking a second look at the rope yourself, you admit, "Okay, maybe it is. Tell you what—I'll go down first. Then, if the coast is clear, I'll signal for you to follow."

With that, you slip over the edge of the roof and begin to shinny down the rope.

Several times, as your hands slip on the rain-wet rope, you're afraid that the end will come a lot sooner than you hope, but finally your toe reaches the ledge. You peer in through the window and see a bedchamber, which appears to be empty.

"So far, so good," you mutter to yourself, but when you try to open the window, you discover it's locked.

"Having trouble?" asks a voice right next to you.

Startled, you very nearly lose your hold on the rope. "Don't do that!" you exclaim.

Wynn smiles. "Sorry. What's the problem?"

"The window's locked."

"Is it? Well, I can take care of that," the elf says, "but I'll have to stop flying first. Climb up and give me room on the rope."

With some difficulty, you do as the elf asks, and in a moment, she is on the rope with you. Then she begins a strange chant, and in another moment, the window soundlessly slides open.

Soon your entire party is safely inside Carlynn's castle, congratulating yourselves on having gotten this far and wondering what to do next.

"This room is too fine to belong to anyone but Carlynn," Wynn says. "We should search it. There may be something here to lead us to my brother."

"But we don't know how long it'll be before someone comes," Sparks argues. "Besides, I *know* where Glorwillam is. He's in the Mirror-of-Life Trapping, which is in the Great Hall. Let's go there first and free him."

Both the elf and the cleric have valid reasons for what they want to do, and at this point, either course could well lead to freeing Pebo and your friends from Carlynn's control. The only problem is, which way is the surest?

1) If you choose to follow Wynn's suggestion and search the room, turn to page 12.

2) If you decide to take Sparks's suggestion and go straight to the Great Hall to try to rescue Glorwillam, turn to page 60.

"No!" you insist. "I won't go into the swamp. I'd rather take my chances right here than be the main course at a lizard man's dinner. Are you with me, Sparks?"

"I . . . I don't know, I—"

"Aw, nuts!" you exclaim disgustedly. "If you can't make up your mind, then just do what I say. Take your sling or use your spells or whatever else you want, but get behind those bushes there. I'll—"

"I'm sorry, Hedge," Sparks suddenly says quite firmly, "but I've come this far to help free Glorwillam, and I won't throw it all away while there's still hope. If Pebo will take me, I'll go into the swamp with him."

"You've got it, Sparks," Pebo says. "Hedge, won't you change your mind?"

"No. I've still got Springer and —" But looking around for her, you discover that your hawk is gone. Then, turning back, you see that Sparks and Pebo have hurried off, too.

You are alone and the orcs, most likely servants of the witch, are closing in.

As your pursuers come into view, you duck into the nearby bushes, wondering if you will succeed in hiding from them or if this will be . . .

THE END

"The lizard men look like dinner time has come!" you exclaim. "We can't wait. We've got to do something!"

"I—I don't . . . I—"

"C'mon, Sparks," you whisper. "This is no time to panic. You've got to keep your head and concentrate. Our lives depend on it!"

Sparks takes a deep breath and calms down. "Okay," he says. "I'll try."

Trying to keep a half-asleep look on his face, the cleric struggles with the ropes binding his hands behind his back.

Then the lizard men come to you and drag the two of you over to the fire pit. When they begin rubbing you down with salt and pepper, you start to panic. If Sparks can't do something soon, you're going to be meat on somebody's plate!

Frantically looking around for anything that might help, you spot a paring knife on the rock where the lizard-man chef has been peeling onions. The next time you are dusted with seasonings, you start coughing and sputtering. Giving a final explosive sneeze, you scoot backward, scattering onions as you slip the knife among the folds of your cape behind your back.

"Sorry," you mumble. "Must be the pepper."

The guards yank you back to the cooking pit, and you twist as they drop you so that your back is toward Sparks's back.

When your captors aren't looking, it takes only a few seconds to slit the ropes around the cleric's hands. Then things begin to happen!

Sparks waves his arms, and a globe of light flares up directly ahead of him—a light much too bright for the lizard men's sensitive eyes. Crying out in pain, they drop their weapons to shield their faces with their arms.

"I did it!" the cleric exclaims happily.

"C'mon!" you shout. "This way!"

Sprinting through the horde of blinded lizard men, you lead Sparks out of the central chamber and down a short tunnel that opens abruptly out of the bank of an underground river. There you hesitate a moment, wondering if your escape will be short-lived. Suddenly you spot among the driftwood that litters the bank a pile that has been lashed together.

As fast as possible, you and Sparks push the roughly made raft into the river and pole well away from the lizard men and their lair.

"Whew! That was close," you say after a while. "I've got to hand it to you, Sparks. If it weren't for you, we'd be a pile of cleaned- off bones by now."

"We still might be if the lizard men figure out where we've gone before this river gets back to the surface," the cleric says. You pole harder, pushing the raft faster than the current. Then, "There!" you shout, catching a glimpse of daylight way ahead of you.

"I just hope we'll be away from the swamp when we come out," you say.

"*I* hope we come out near a town Carlynn hasn't transformed yet. Maybe I'll be able to form

a party there to rescue Glorwillam." Then he sighs. "But hiring a party takes money."

"There are ways two clever fellows can finance an adventure," you say. "Don't count me out. After all, my hometown is still full of people-turned-lizard, and my Ranger Master's still a chameleon. I promised I'd help them out of this mess, didn't I?"

Grinning, Sparks turns to you. "You'll stay with me then, Hedge?"

"Sure, why not?" you answer. "We make a pretty good team, Kor-Kiran! Somehow we'll just have to start over and try again."

THE END

"Let's go for the sure thing," you say. "Since we know where Glorwillam is, let's see what we can do about getting him free first. I'd feel much more comfortable if we had him with us."

Wynn hesitates, then reluctantly nods. "Perhaps you are right, Ranger. We will go to Glorwillam's rescue first."

Following Sparks's lead, your party quietly leaves the bedroom and follows a long stone hallway to the front of the castle, where a dark staircase winds down to the main floor. You start to descend but hear voices below you.

"Bugbears!" Wynn whispers. "Hide!"

"Hide?" you snap in disbelief. "There's nowhere to hide here."

"Then you'd best prepare to fight!" At that, Wynn draws her sword with one hand and pulls her cloak over her armor with the other.

"Yoicks!" you exclaim as the elf disappears from sight. "Where'd she go?"

"Hush!" Sparks whispers as he moves to your side. Then he spreads his arms out wide and begins a low, quiet chant.

"Wonderful," you think as you draw your sword. "My elf does a disappearing act, my cleric starts a concert, and— Oops! Here they come!"

As three yellow bugbears shuffle up the stairs, you plant your feet wide apart and brace yourself for the worst. The ugly creatures, however, don't draw their weapons. They don't even raise an alarm at finding intruders in the castle. They just shamble on by as if they don't see you at all!

Hardly daring to breathe, you stand quietly until they've turned the corner at the far end of the hall.

It's only then that the cleric stops his chanting and whispers proudly, "How about that, Hedge? I cast a spell of invisibility to protect the both of us—and no fireworks!"

"Fireworks?" the elf asks, pushing back her cloak so you can see her again.

"Sometimes Sparks has a bit of a problem with his spells, my dear," Springer replies. "Fates willing, we'll be able to tell you all about it later. Right now, let's get on with this while we have the chance."

"Right," you say. "Let's go."

Following the silent hand signals Sparks gives, you cautiously, quietly lead your party down the stairs and through another long hallway until you come to a place where the hallway turns to the left. There, Sparks motions for you to stop.

"The Great Hall is at the end of the corridor, just beyond this corner," he whispers. "The Mirror-of-Life Trapping that holds Glorwillam is in there."

Nodding, you signal the others to stay back. Then you edge up to the corner and peer into the corridor beyond.

"Looks like the coast is clear," you whisper. "The door to the Hall is open. Let me go on ahead and check things out."

Moments later, you're back with your friends again. "As far as I can tell, the Hall's empty. But

it's awfully dark in there. I couldn't see all the way across it."

"Then it's time for the coin again, my dear," Springer suggests. "But just you and I won't be enough. We'll need the elf's infravision as well."

"Right," you say. "How about it, Wynn?"

The elf nods. "I have no desire to enter Carlynn's Great Hall blindly. I shall do whatever is necessary."

"Good," you say.

At the door of the Great Hall, you take Wynn's hand and signal for Springer to alight on your shoulder. You briefly wish you could add Sparks's ability to detect magic to the combination, too, but someone has to keep watch while you're using the coin. You brace yourself and reach into your pocket.

❖ *Turn to page 133 to see if there is something in Carlynn's Great Hall, or is it really as empty as it seems?*

"It's empty all right," you say.

"Impossible!" Sparks argues. "Carlynn's always in there. Something's got to be wrong."

"Then perhaps we had better not try to rescue Glorwillam now," says Wynn, with a tone of relief in her voice.

"Look, Wynn," you say, "I know coming here first isn't what you'd have done, but the decision was made, and now that we've gotten this far, there really isn't much sense in turning back, is

there? Tell you what—if you want to leave now, you're free to go."

"No!" Wynn exclaims. "I will stay."

You're a little confused by the elf's rapid changes of mind, but you decide not to waste time worrying about it now. "All right then," you say, "I'll go in alone. The rest of you stay here and keep watch."

"Would you not have me come with you?" Wynn asks. "You may need some assistance."

"I don't think so," you say. "If anything does happen, Sparks and Springer will need you more."

"Hedge, listen carefully," Sparks whispers. "The Mirror-of-Life Trapping is behind the curtain just to the left of the throne. To free Glorwillam, you must break the mirror, but take care not to look into it or you'll be trapped, too."

"Right," you say, and giving Sparks a pat on the arm, you go on into the Great Hall.

Using the shadows along the edges of the Hall for cover, you inch your way forward through a maze of statues until you're standing in front of the curtained mirror. The fact that you haven't been discovered should be a relief, but the lack of guards only makes you uneasy—so uneasy, in fact, that you waste no time in picking up a statuette that feels heavy enough to break the mirror through the curtain.

Just then, a terrible commotion breaks out behind you. Your heart skips a beat—your friends must have been found!

Taking care to stay hidden behind Carlynn's throne, you peer around its high wooden back and see Sparks and Springer being hauled away from the open door by three huge hobgoblins. But you can't see Wynn anywhere—not until you turn around and find the elf standing near you in the space behind the throne. You hadn't heard her approach.

"Quickly, Hedge, let's get after those hobgoblins at once. We may yet catch them before they reach the dungeons."

"But Glorwillam's in the Mirror-of-Life Trapping right behind that curtain," you reply with a frown. "Just give me a second—"

"No!" the elf hisses urgently.

As she comes toward you, that same cold chill you felt when the red dragon first came to Halstyn suddenly rushes through you, warning you against—against what? Against Wynn? Is the elf not what she seems?

Fighting down a growing sense of panic, you try to keep the hand that grasps the statuette from shaking. "You could be right, Wynn. Just give me a moment to put this down—" With all your might, you hurl the statuette at the curtain covering the Mirror-of-Life Trapping.

There is the sound of breaking glass, and a great cloud of dark smoke billows out from behind the curtain.

"You—you wretched little weasel!" Wynn screams. "Wouldn't listen, would you? Well, now you'll pay!"

Abruptly, the elf disappears, and in her place stands a tall, slender, red-haired woman dressed in a sorceress's robes. From a golden chain around her neck hangs a large, sparkling crystal. She takes the crystal in one hand and points at you with the other.

At once, you begin to feel very odd, indeed. Your body feels as if it's getting smaller, sleeker. You see brown fur beginning to cover your hands and arms. The next thing you know, you are on all fours, looking up at the sorceress as if from a great distance. She is laughing as she watches your transformation into the weasel she accused you of being.

But the changes that are happening to you don't stop there. In another moment, you hear a deep voice chanting yet another spell, and you feel yourself growing again. You feel a rush of relief, but only for a moment. You're not changing back into a ranger, but into a giant weasel!

The sorceress stops laughing, and an expression of surprise and horror covers her face.

"It's all over, Witch," you hear a voice say from behind you. Turning your furry head, you see an old cleric standing in front of the broken Mirror-of-Life Trapping.

"Think you can stop me, do you?" the witch shouts back. "Well, think again, old man!" She grips the crystal tightly, and a plume of red smoke billows up around her.

"Quickly!" the old cleric shouts at you. "Get the crystal! Do not let her escape!"

At once, you grab for the crystal with one hand and the witch with the other—but there's hardly anything for you to grab on to. Her body's beginning to fade! She's disappearing!

"Good work!" the old cleric exclaims as he comes to take the crystal in his hand.

"But where is she? Where's she gone?" you ask in wonder, both at the disappearance of the witch and at your being able to speak.

The old cleric shrugs and smiles. "It doesn't matter," he says. "Without this crystal, she will never be able to return and carry on her evil deeds. You have stopped that witch once and for all, my fine young . . . "

"Ranger," you say as the cleric hesitates. "I know I don't look it right now, but that's what I am, and my name is Hedge. My Ranger Master was turned into a chameleon by that witch, and I came here with a cleric called Sparks and my hawk to free—well, to free you, I think. Are you Glorwillam?"

"I am," says the old cleric, "and your 'Sparks' must be my Kor-Kiran—I think I recognize the reason for the nickname. Where is he, anyway? Not taken off, has he?"

"Oh, no!" you exclaim, remembering. "He and my hawk have been captured by hobgoblins."

"Have they, indeed? Perhaps we'd best see what we can do to free them, and then we'll see about that Ranger Master of yours—and everyone else the witch transformed as well."

"Right!" you say. Then you hesitate a moment.

"Uh, Glorwillam, maybe we'd better do something else first."

"Hmmmm? What's that?"

"Well, could you start with me? I don't think Springer will take too kindly to being rescued by a weasel!"

THE END

"Okay, Pebo," you finally say. "If you think we'll be safer in the swamp, let's go."

Just as you dart into the forest shadows, you hear the orcs shouting about your footprints, and you know you have to hurry. You and the others quickly follow Pebo through the woods until suddenly the ground beneath your feet changes to mud. You tremble as you realize that you've reached the swamp.

You hesitate at its brink a moment, wondering if this is such a good idea after all, but the sound of the pursuing orcs close on your heels makes you plunge ahead.

The deeper you go into the swamp, the more you perspire in the increasing humidity, but the discomfort becomes worth it when you realize that you can no longer hear the orcs behind you.

You're just beginning to relax when Springer suddenly lets out a startled squawk and soars into the sky above you.

"Pebo, what's going on?" you turn to ask, but he's gone, too. Before you can call out to him again, the pools of mucky water around you begin to bubble furiously, and out of them rises an army of tall, thin, green creatures with scaly lizard faces and clawed fingers. Their tails thrash the water.

"Lizard men!" you shout. You and Sparks try to turn and make a dash for it, but more creatures pop up behind you. They waste no time in binding your hands and dragging you down a mud cone into their lair.

Propped against a cold clay wall, you and Sparks watch your captors prepare for dinner—and you know *you* are to be the main course!

"Unless you can do something to get us out of here, we're goners," you whisper to Sparks.

"I can't do anything, not without using my hands," the cleric whispers back. "Maybe Pebo will find a way to rescue us."

"Humph!" you grunt angrily. "Look, Sparks, Pebo and Springer took off the minute the lizard men showed up. All we've got now is us, and in a minute, we're going to be spitted and roasted!"

"If we are, Pebo will have to stay a lizard forever, and both of us know he doesn't want that," Sparks reminds you. "But it's up to you. I can try to get my hands free—and hope the lizard men don't catch me at it—or we can wait a bit and see if help comes."

1) Waiting is too risky when you're about to become somebody's dinner! Turn to page 56.

2) Sparks is right—Pebo needs you, so he's certain to come to your rescue. Turn to page 82.

The old woman and the elf are both staring hungrily at the sphere you hold, and you realize that you don't dare take the risk of using the magic coin.

"Sorry, Sparks," you say. "We're going to have to make our own judgment on this one. We can't afford to let this powerful orb fall into the wrong hands."

"But which ones are the wrong hands?" the cleric asks. "If the old woman is really the imposter and you give the orb to her, we're doomed."

"Just as doomed as if you give it to Wynn and she's really Jenna," Springer adds. "Hedge, my dear, we truly appear to be on the horns of a dilemma."

"Ask the orb," suggests Carlynn quietly. "It will tell you what you want to know."

"That's right!" Sparks exclaims. "The orb answered your questions before."

"But you don't know for sure that it told you the truth," Wynn reminds you, smiling slightly. "If it lied to you once, it could do so again."

Thinking back to when you used the coin in Carlynn's bedroom, you remember that the aura you saw around the wardrobe door hiding the orb was clear and bright—hardly a sign of bad magic.

"I think I'll give it a try anyway," you say. "Golden orb, tell me how I can know your mistress when I see her?"

As before, the golden orb begins to glow and vibrate in your hands. Then it speaks.

"Mistress of magic and
Brewer of spells
The mark of the cauldron
The true Carlynn tells."

"Nice," you say. "We're in deep trouble here, and this thing gives us poetry."

"But not without meaning, my dear," says Springer. "Once we figure out what 'the mark of the cauldron' is, we'll know if we've found Carlynn."

"'Mark of the cauldron', indeed!" snorts the elf. "The imposter stands right here before you. Solving this riddle will gain you nothing. Meanwhile, you give this imposter time to set a plan against you. Give me the orb, Hedge."

You look at the elf—an elf who appeared out of nowhere!—and wonder why she wants the orb so badly. She certainly couldn't use its magic, not without the staff, and not unless she knew how to make it work.

Just then, the cleric runs to the old woman, pushes up her long sleeves, and begins turning her arms this way and that.

"Criminy, Sparks!" you exclaim. "What on earth are you doing?"

"The mark of the cauldron," he mutters. "I know magic, Hedge. Clerical magic, but magic nonetheless. I've gotten burned plenty of times myself, not with a cauldron, but with sparks. It happens to almost everyone. You can't avoid it when you study magic."

Then he steps back, blushes, and says, "Sorry, madam, but it must be done." And he reaches for the hem of the old woman's skirt.

"Sparks!" you exclaim.

The old woman raises her hand to silence you. "Let him be, Ranger. He knows."

Lifting the woman's skirt only as far as her knee, the cleric finds what he's looking for: a long, puckered scar—all that's left of a nasty burn—covering the woman's shin.

Immediately, the elf lets out an angry shriek and lunges for the golden orb.

You are ready for her, though, and you toss the orb to Sparks, who instantly fits it onto the top of the staff.

There is a bright flash of light, and, where the old woman had been standing, a young and beautiful sorceress appears.

In the same instant, the illusion that has been hiding Wynn's true identity is dispelled, leaving a tall, red-haired, defiant-looking girl standing in her place. She, too, wears long sorceress robes, and a crystal hangs on a chain around her neck.

At once, the girl grasps the crystal and begins to chant . . . but nothing happens.

"The power in the crystal is gone, Jenna," says Carlynn quietly.

The fear in Jenna's eyes continues to grow as she stutters, "I—I am defeated. What . . . what will you do with me now, Carlynn?"

"I should punish your foolishness in challenging me with the same fate you gave your victims,

but living out your life as some lowly creature of the wood would teach you nothing." Carlynn points a slender finger at her apprentice. "This shall be your fate instead: a spell of forgetfulness I cast upon you. All knowledge of magic shall be erased from your memory, and you shall leave here desiring not power, but to meet the needs of others."

In a flash of smoke, Jenna disappears.

"Now," Carlynn says, turning to you and your friends, "as for you . . . "

For a moment, panic flutters in the pit of your stomach. What will the sorceress do? Is she really evil after all?

The answer to that comes quickly.

The sorceress smiles and says, "My brave young rescuers, to you, any and all rewards you claim shall be given."

Your eyes meet Sparks's, and the two of you smile as you answer, "We both have masters Jenna didn't like and . . . "

THE END

"Hmmm. If this horn really is magic, maybe it'll break through whatever Carlynn's using to protect the castle," you think aloud. You put the horn to your lips and blow.

At first, nothing happens—no sound, no magic, nothing. Then all at once, a terrible wave of sound hits you. It's so painfully loud, you can actually feel yourself losing consciousness.

Too late, you realize Carlynn's spell must be reflecting the horn's effects back at you, and there's nothing you can do to stop it.

Hours later, you awaken in a cold, dark cell, which you can only assume lies somewhere deep beneath the castle itself. You are alone and weaponless—your backpack and sword are gone and your pockets have been emptied. All you can do is sit back, wait, and wonder.

Were any of your friends able to escape the horn's effects? Will any of them be able to come to your rescue? Or has this adventure now come to an

END

In the dead of night, the lizard men guide you, Sparks, and the giant chameleon to within sight of Carlynn's castle. There they thankfully leave you and return to their lair. A moment later, Sparks's growth spell fades, and Pebo shrinks to the size of a normal chameleon.

"Pebo," you whisper, "that was the best bit of playacting ever!"

Pebo laughs. "Thanks, kid. You two weren't so bad yourselves."

"I'm afraid we may have another problem now." Sparks frowns as he stares at the castle before you. "This isn't the same castle I saw here before. I remember those trees and that outbuilding. But it's . . . it's the castle itself that's different."

Pebo thinks for a moment. "Maybe it's just a spell making it look different. That's possible, isn't it?"

"Well . . . yes. It could be an illusion, but . . . "

"But what?" Pebo urges. "All you've got to do is remember what it looked like when you came here with Glorwillam."

"Pebo, what Sparks saw before might've been an illusion, too," you remind him.

"Too true, my dears. Too true."

"Springer!" you exclaim softly.

"You were expecting the Great Swamp Lizard perhaps?" the hawk chortles. "Nice plan we cooked up, Pebo."

"Nicer than I hoped," the chameleon says. "How about you? How'd your part go?"

"Not so well. I did find the castle guards in that barracks over there. They're human, too. But this castle's changed appearance three times just since I've been here! A door's a door—then it's a window—then it's a wall!"

"We get the picture!" snaps Pebo. "So now what?"

"How about a peek through the illusion, Sparks?" you say, reaching for your coin.

The cleric shakes his head. "Too dangerous. If guards show up while we're using the coin, we won't even be able to run." Then he nods at the horn hanging around your neck. "The lizard-man chief thought that was something pretty special. Maybe it's a Horn of Blasting. Let's try using it to shatter the illusion."

"Talk about dangerous!" Springer says. "My dears, your safest bet is to steal a couple of uniforms and look for a chance to sneak inside the castle with the guards."

You listen to your friends' suggestions and wonder which method would be the best.

1) If you want to sneak some uniforms from the barracks and enter the castle as guards, turn to page 86.

2) If you prefer to ignore the risks and use the coin, turn to page 130.

3) If you'd rather see if the horn will blast through the illusion, turn to page 75.

"I'm for trying that side door. Could we get through the illusion there, Sparks?"

The cleric shrugs. "I guess so—as long as we keep remembering that what we are seeing isn't real."

"Good," you say. "If I'm not mistaken, I saw the door right over there," you say, pointing.

"Right!" Pebo grumbles. "And just how do you plan on getting across that moat?"

"Moat!" You laugh. Then, hoping you remember what you saw through the illusion, you add, "Just watch this!"

As your friends gasp, you step out on to the surface of the water. You try to appear casual as you try desperately to remember where you saw the spear points and step from point to point. Then, the castle suddenly changes shape again and what looked like a moat before now looks like a deep pit.

Convinced now that their eyes are seeing an illusion, your companions follow you on to the trail of spearpoints. Soon you reach a high, unbroken wall.

"At least that door is still here," you say. You inspect it closely and add, "I just hope it isn't an illusion. Sparks, I need your help again."

"Oh, no," Sparks replies. "Something about this place gives me the willies. I'm not going risk using the coin now! Anything could happen while we're frozen."

"We *need* to see through this illusion," you say firmly. And not giving the cleric a chance to

argue, you grasp your magic coin while you touch his shoulder.

❖ *Turn to page 143 and look at the door with the aid of the Crimson Crystal to see what you see through Sparks's eye.*

"Yoicks! Sparks was right! We shouldn't have used the coin!" you think. But since you're still in the magic coin's power, there isn't a thing you can do but watch as the door pops open. Springer tries to hold back the rush of evil skeletons with her sharp talons and beak, and Pebo does his best to trip them before they can reach you.

It's only after a skeleton guard's sword sends a terrible pain ripping through your left arm that the coin's magic finally fades.

Then, as skillfully as any full ranger, you fight off skeleton after skeleton. But you soon tire, and your arm begins to throb fiercely. In fact, you are just about to give up when the skeletons suddenly stop fighting and run away as if something dreadful were after them.

You see Sparks standing near you holding on to his medallion. "At least I've never had trouble turning the undead," he says. "They won't stay away forever, though. We'd better get moving."

"But I'm bleeding!" you exclaim, staring aghast at the red stain spreading down your sleeve. That wasn't in your training!

"I can take care of that, too," says the cleric proudly. "Hold still."

While Sparks tends your arm with some kind of magical ointment, Pebo and Springer make a quick search of the room beyond the door.

"It's a crypt," Pebo says when he returns. "A dead end. Nothing in there but dust!"

Please turn back to page 132
and make another choice.

"I've never known Pebo to desert a fellow ranger in trouble," you say. "Maybe we could hold on just a little longer."

Holding on isn't easy, though, since you and Sparks have to sit and let every lizard man in the lair—including an especially big and ugly fellow who seems to be the chief—come by to pinch and poke you and lick his lips as he claims which portion of you he'll have for dinner!

Still, you manage to keep up your hope that help will arrive. At least, you manage until the lizard men untie the two of you so they can transfer you onto spits for roasting. At that point, just when you decide you'd better do something quickly, a voice echoes through the cavern.

"Bow down! The Spirit of the Great Swamp Lizard is upon you!"

"Oh, no!" Sparks groans. "What next?"

"Hush, you goose! That's Pebo's voice!"

"Pebo? Where? What's he doing?"

"I can't see him. It's too dark in here," you reply. "But if this is his idea of a rescue, we're doomed. These lizard men aren't going to buy his 'Great Swamp Lizard' routine when they find out he's just a chameleon. *We* have to do something."

"There's a spell I can work," Sparks offers, "but—but I need to know exactly where Pebo is."

Hoping the cleric won't ruin Pebo's plan with a lot of unwelcome fireworks, you say, "*We* might not be able to see in the dark, but these lizard men can. They can help me find him. Follow the direction of my eyes, when I use my coin."

As Sparks gasps, you struggle against your ropes, managing to push your hand into your pocket and pinch your magic coin. Then you throw yourself forward against the legs of the nearest lizard man. "Oh, no!" you plead. "Not the Great Swamp Lizard! Save me! Save me!"

❖ *Turn to page 134 to see if the magic coin lets you see Pebo in the dark through the lizard man's eyes.*

As usual, it takes a moment for the coin's magic to fade, but once it has, you know your plan has worked. Sparks has watched where your eyes focused and has begun to cast his spell. You can hear the lizard men gasp in surprise as a giant chameleon seems to grow out of nothing. It continues to grow and grow, until even you begin to believe it might be the Great Swamp Lizard.

"So!" Pebo's voice booms. "There you are, you wicked little wretches. Thought you could escape your master, did you?"

"No, Great Lizard!" you wail as you run to Pebo's side. "The lizard men captured us in the swamp."

"Oh, indeed, Master!" Sparks chimes in. "And they meant to eat us!"

"Can this be true?" Pebo bellows at the befuddled lizard-man chief. "Did you capture these two miserable servants of the Great Swamp Lizard?" The chameleon's voice thunders through the cavern.

"We . . . uh . . . " The lizard man looks bewildered and frightened at the same time.

"It is true! Prepare to know my wrath!"

"Please," the Chief hisses, bowing continuously as he talks. "You have them back now. They are unharmed."

"But you meant to harm us!" you cry. "I've got salt and pepper in my hair to prove it. My master must punish you."

"Punish us?" the chief cries. "No, Great Lizard. Accept this . . . a tribute to your majesty. It is magic." He takes a strange-looking animal horn from around his neck and lays it at Pebo's feet.

At a nod from Pebo, you slowly pick up the horn as he says, "If you would escape punishment, you must perform a service."

"Great Lizard, any service you require."

"My servants were traveling to the great castle near Trymn when you captured them. I would have you guide us there if you know a secret and quiet way."

"Indeed, we know a way," says the lizard men's chief. "We will take you at once."

Please turn to page 76.

"No. Waldo's too unpredictable. We'd better not do anything to upset him," you decide, and rolling over, you drift off to sleep.

The next thing you know, Sparks is shaking you.

"Hedge! Hedge, wake up! Waldo's gone and he's taken all his things with him."

You sit up and look around in disbelief, but it seems Sparks is right. There's nothing left in the cave except the skins you and the cleric slept on.

"Well, Mad Waldo proves true to his name again, my dears," Springer says. "Do we trust his secret way into Carlynn's or not?"

"I vote no," says Sparks. "The tunnel could be a trap. Let's go back to the forest. It might be a longer way, but I bet it's safer."

"Maybe," you say, "but if Waldo really didn't mean to help us, he wouldn't have shown us the secret path."

"Which brings us back to the original question," says Springer. "Do we trust his secret way into Carlynn's, or don't we?"

1) If you want to take a chance on Waldo's secret path, turn to page 99.

2) If you don't feel you can trust Waldo's tunnel, turn to page 124.

"Maybe it would be best to try sneaking in with the guards," you say. "After all, infiltrating is one of the things I'm trained to do. You're in this with me, aren't you, Sparks?"

Sparks looks undecided—but only for as long as it takes the castle to suddenly change its appearance again. "Absolutely!" he says at once. "Just tell me what to do."

Grinning, you reply, "Okay, here's the plan. Since it's still night, the guards not on duty will be sleeping. Sparks, you and I'll slip into the barracks and find ourselves a couple of uniforms and empty beds. Pebo, you and Springer stay here in the courtyard and keep watch. With luck, morning will bring a change of guard in the castle, and we'll be able to go in with them."

Sparks nods, and you both head toward the barracks.

When you creep up to a window and peer in, you see that everything is as you hoped. The guards are asleep and their uniforms hang on hooks along one of the walls.

You put your finger to your lips to warn Sparks to silence, then point toward the door.

Once inside the barracks, your plan seems to be working without a hitch. You and the cleric tiptoe in and lift two uniforms off their hooks. Then you find two empty beds and crawl into them.

Just as you slide beneath the covers of one bed, though, you hear a commotion coming from the other end of the room, where you left Sparks.

"Hey! What are you doing?" you hear a gruff voice exclaim. "That's my bed! Get in there, you little weasel, and you'll be sorry!"

Your breath catches in your throat, and you can feel your heart beating wildly. The next thing you know, the familiar rotten-egg smell of one of Sparks's failed spells fills your nostrils.

"They caught him!" you think in horror.

You lie there wondering what to do. You can come to his aid at once, of course, and try to get him free, or you can keep pretending to be a guard and hope that you'll be able to find a better way to rescue your friend later.

1) If you want to act now, even if it means a fight with the guards, turn to page 95.

2) If you choose to wait and see if you can find a better way to save Sparks, turn to page 88.

Hoping to calm Sparks with a hint of your plan, you slip out of bed and melt into the crowd of arguing guards.

"Throw him to the panther!" shouts one.

"Feed him to the toads!" cries another.

"Let's see what he's worth!" you exclaim loudly. "There's got to be a reward for spy-catching! Let's take him to the mistress!"

"Now?" the chief guard snorts. "We'd get a lifetime as chipmunks if we woke her at this time of night. Morning will be soon enough to see about a reward. Just tie him up and get back to bed all of you. The next watch will come soon enough."

As you and the other guards return to your cots, you glance back at Sparks. The silent nod he gives you lets you know he has seen you and understands.

The next morning, you join the ranks of Carlynn's guards when they march their prisoner into the castle. You quietly keep pace with the others until they stop at a door that opens into what appears to be the Great Hall.

The Hall is a long, narrow room cluttered with statues on pedestals and darkened by heavy tapestries covering all the walls. At the far end is a throne, and sitting on it is a shadowy figure you assume is Carlynn herself.

"Come forward," she calls. "Let me see what you have brought me."

As the guards move forward, you slip away into the shadows along the edges of the Hall.

"Pretty clever so far, kid," a voice suddenly

whispers quite near you. "What next?"

"Pebo?" you whisper back. "Where—"

"Up here."

Squinting toward the voice, you spot the chameleon clinging to a curtain near your head.

"What's the plan now?" asks Pebo.

"I thought I'd just see how things stand, then go from there."

"Not exactly grade *A* planning, kid," the chameleon replies. "Look, I'm taking to the ceiling. You go on the way you were heading and make for the area behind Carlynn's throne. When you're there, I'll try to get her attention while you break the Mirror-of-Life Trapping. It's behind the curtain there. And don't waste time doing it, okay?"

Without waiting for a reply, the chameleon skitters up the wall and disappears into the shadows.

With a shrug, you mutter, "Okay," and you carefully move forward, listening to the conversation at the throne.

"—A prisoner, Mistress. A spy caught stealing uniforms in the barracks last night," says the leader.

"A spy?" Carlynn exclaims. "In the barracks? Step forward, cleric. I want to see anyone who can break through my defenses."

You creep behind the throne and peek out to see Sparks moving closer to the witch.

"Why, it's Glorwillam's apprentice!" Carlynn says with a cold edge in her voice. "Back to free

your master, are you? And alone? What's the matter—couldn't you find any help?"

"You did your best to see I wouldn't," Sparks replies boldly.

The witch suddenly laughs. "Yes, that was a stroke of genius, wasn't it? A whole village of rangers turned into liz—"

"You'd best think again, Carlynn. The last laugh just may be on you!" Pebo calls, and you see him drop off the ceiling right into Carlynn's lap.

Jumping up, the witch tosses the chameleon away from her with a flick of her skirt. "Lay your slimy little feet on me, will you?" she shrieks.

Instantly, a purple fog forms around the witch, and through it, you can see her changing into a giant falcon.

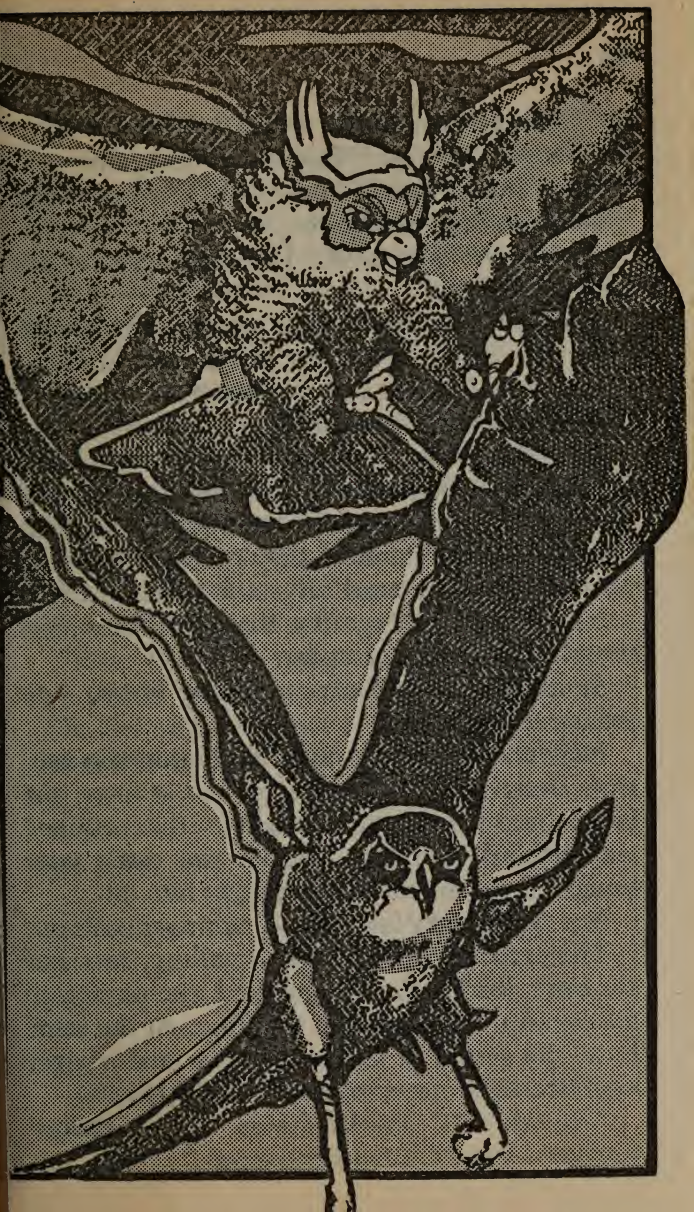
"Hedge!" Sparks shouts. "Around her neck! Grab the crystal! Quick!"

Startled, you hesitate a half second too long. The witch's transformation is almost complete by the time you dart out of hiding.

"Not on your life, Ranger!" the falcon/sorceress squawks as you try to reach the crystal.

Just then, Springer darts out of nowhere to make a swooping pass at the falcon.

The falcon answers with a terrifying shriek, and as she takes to the air after the hawk, you hear a sharp snap.



The sorceress's crystal is now yours!

"Hedge! Look out!" Sparks shouts again.

Spinning around, you see Carlynn's huge guards moving toward you.

"Criminy!!" you think. "I need ten arms to take care of all them!"

Suddenly, you feel awfully strange, almost as if you had blacked out for a second. Looking down, you discover that you have ten arms!

You look at the arm holding Carlynn's crystal and whistle softly. "Powerful stuff!" you exclaim. You quickly pocket the crystal and head toward the guards—what's left of them. Most of them disappeared the moment they saw you begin to change. The rest need only one look at a ten-armed fighter coming after them to throw their weapons down in surrender.

Suddenly a shrill cry sounding above you makes you look up.

High above you, Springer darts this way and that, dodging the angry falcon. All at once, she turns sharply and heads straight for the curtained wall behind Carlynn's throne! You catch your breath. Does she mean to fly right into it?

No! At the very last second, Springer pulls up.

The pursuing falcon tries to pull up, too, but she can't. With a shuddering thud, she slams into the curtain, then drops to the floor. At the same time, the sound of shattering glass and a great rush of smoke come from behind the curtain.

"The Mirror!" Sparks shouts. "Look, Hedge! Carlynn's freed Glorwillam herself!"

You see Sparks run toward a wise-looking, bearded, old man stepping out from behind the curtain. The patriarch—for it must be he—pats his apprentice on the head, then bends to examine the falcon. "The witch has brought an end to herself as well, it seems," he says. "The falcon's neck is broken."

"And her spells are, too!" Pebo exclaims. "Look! I'm me again!"

You smile at your Ranger Master, glad to see him again, but . . . "I wish I could say the same," you moan. "How come you're you again, but I've still got all these arms?"

"That spell is controlled by the crystal," Glorwillam explains. "If you would give the crystal to me, Ranger, I will restore you."

"You've got it!" you say, trying to maneuver just one of your many hands into your pocket. "The sooner I'm me again, the sooner I'll feel like this adventure really has successfully reached

THE END

Picking up a nearby statue, you crash it first against one curtain, then against the other.

At once, a white-haired old man steps out from behind the first curtain. Then a woman who must be Carlynn steps out from behind the second. The two face each other a moment. Then the sorceress begins casting a spell aimed at the old patriarch cleric.

Without thinking, you leap into her line of fire and point at her. "Stop that, Witch!"

For an instant, anger flashes in the witch's eyes. Then, she looks bewildered. "'Tis Spring," she suddenly sings. "Too-loo-ra-lay. Too-loo-ra-ly."

"Good for you!" The patriarch laughs. "You've stopped the witch once and for all!"

"Me?" you ask, astonished. "How?"

Pointing to your hand, Glorwillam says, "Yours is a Ring of Spell Turning. Didn't you know?"

"No." You stare at the ring Waldo left you in exchange for your magic coin. "No, I didn't," you say softly.

"Then your bravery is to be praised even more, for without knowing it, you have turned Carlynn's spell of feeblemindedness back on her, and you have brought her reign of fear and treachery to a most fitting

END

Pretending that the racket didn't wake you, you move slightly under your blanket and slowly ease a hand toward the hilt of your sword. It's very nearly within your grasp when your back strikes a sharp object.

You lie absolutely still, but whatever is being pressed into your back won't be ignored. Playacting at waking abruptly, you open your eyes.

To your horror, you find your bed surrounded by Carlynn's guards, each looking larger and fiercer than the next. Their weapons are all drawn and pointed at you—that is, all of them that aren't pointed at the woeful Sparks.

Remembering that "discretion is the better part of valor," you slowly pull both of your hands out from beneath the blanket, and when they are in full sight of the guards, you carefully sit up.

Minutes later, you and Sparks find yourselves locked in a tower room high up in the castle. The guards have taken your backpack and weapons. All you have left are your skills, your wits, the lizard men's horn, and, of course, the knowledge that Pebo and Springer are still outside somewhere.

You settle back against the cold stone wall of your cell and look at Sparks. "Well, got anything to get us out of this one?" you ask.

The cleric shakes his head sadly. "'Fraid not. What about you?"

"Only this," you say, looking at the horn in disgust.

"Well, the lizard men did say it was magic."

"Sure," you say, "but who knows what kind? Maybe it'll just take us back to their lair so they can make dinner out of us."

"What do you want to do then?" Sparks asks. "Just wait?"

You nod. "Pebo rescued us once. He might be able to do it again."

The cleric sighs. "I suppose so. It's just— Well, we're finally inside the castle and—and Glorwillam's so close. I want to *do* something!"

Please turn to page 135.

You draw your sword, but before you can use it, it's knocked from your hand. You find your arms pinned to your sides by the moist stickiness of a toad's long tongue. As the creature drags you closer and closer to its mouth like some giant fly, you can hear Sparks beginning to mumble a spell. You have little confidence that it will work before you and he both come to a most untimely

END

You softly call, "Glorwillam!"

But no reply comes.

"A little louder maybe," you think.

"Glorwillam!" you call again. And all at once, everything breaks loose around you.

Fireworks explode in a sparkling display behind you.

The panther is released from its spell, darts past Sparks, and heads toward you.

A faint voice calls, "Here!"—but you can't tell where "here" is.

And a score of hobgoblins appear in the doorway of the Great Hall, their weapons aimed at Springer and Sparks.

Should you rush to the aid of your friends, or should you go ahead and try to free Glorwillam by smashing whatever lies behind the two curtains?

1) If you're determined to release Glorwillam no matter what, turn to page 94.

2) If you think it's more important to help Springer, turn to page 125.

"I doubt if we'll run into anything any worse in that hole than we would in the forest," you say. "Besides, it's got to be a shorter route. C'mon."

Moving cautiously, you crawl into Waldo's tunnel with Sparks behind you, and begin the journey that will—you hope!—take you into Carlynn's castle.

"Hedge, my dear," Springer says as she scrabbles along beside you, "far be it from me to complain, but my legs were meant for catching rabbits on the fly, not walking. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if all this rock and dirt isn't dulling my talons and—"

SSSSST!

"Really!" the hawk snaps. "You needn't be so rude, my dear. If you want me to keep quiet, just say so. You don't have to shush me."

"Don't get your tail feathers in an uproar, bird. It wasn't me," you say.

"Well, it was *some*body," the hawk says. "I heard it most distinctly."

SSSSST!

"You see, there it is again."

Pulling up short, you shoot a quick glance back at Sparks, but the cleric only shakes his head.

"Criminy!" you exclaim. "What is it then? It sounds like—"

SSSST!

"S-s-snakes?" quavers Sparks.

"If it's not, my dear, it's a jolly good imitation," Springer mutters. "And me stuck on the ground.

Let's get a move on. I won't be caught at a disadvantage by one of *them*."

"But wh-which way?" Sparks stammers.

"Ahead's the only way," you say. "There's no room to turn around in here."

But the hissing gets louder the farther you go. You stop abruptly when you see a small light ahead of you.

"Okay," you whisper to the friends behind you, "you two stay put while I go on ahead and take a look."

Drawing on every scouting skill you ever learned, you creep forward slowly, quietly, until you reach what is indeed the mouth of the tunnel. You peer out into a small chamber.

At first, you're frozen in your tracks by a huge, dreadful-looking creature peering back at you. Then you clamber into the chamber and, after a moment, collapse in a fit of laughter.

"Hedge? Hedge, what's . . . what's the matter?" Sparks calls from the tunnel. "Are you all r-right?"

"Yes," you gasp between giggles. "Come on out. You'll love this."

Hesitantly, Sparks and Springer creep out of the tunnel to join you.

"What—what is that thing?" the cleric asks.

"It's an old bear skull," you say. "And strapped to it is a set of moose antlers. This skin is wolf, I think. And in here—in here are our snakes!"

Lifting the wolf skin, you show your friends the bizarre apparatus that makes a hissing sound

every time the squirrel inside it takes a turn around its exercise wheel.

"Waldo!" Springer exclaims.

"You got it," you chuckle. "We should've known he wouldn't leave his secret tunnel unguarded."

"Hedge," the cleric complains, "we've got so many *real* dangers to face, how can you think this is funny?"

"Lighten up, Sparks," you say. "This thing would scare away anyone who doesn't know Waldo as well as I do. Besides, there's a ladder over there that's got to be the way up into Carlynn's castle."

The ladder leads to a small trapdoor. Pressing your ear to it, you listen a moment, then push the door open a crack. A dank, cool draft drifts down around you, and you can hear voices murmuring not very far away. There doesn't seem to be any immediate danger, though, so you lift the door a little more. Now you can see a large, dark cavern filled with stalactites and stalagmites, and a tiny stream trickling through it.

Everything still looks safe enough, so you push the door open all the way and, motioning for the others to follow, climb into the chamber.

"Now where to?" Sparks whispers as he joins you.

"That way, I guess," you reply, nodding toward an opening at the side of the chamber. "It's the only way out. Be quiet, though. The voices are coming from that way, too."

The closer to the opening you get, the louder the voices become, and the clearer it is that they're not human. Taking care to stay well hidden, you creep quietly up to the opening ahead of the others and take a look.

"There are at least a dozen giant toads in there!" you report back to Sparks and Springer. "Real ones!"

"Castle indeed!" Sparks grumbles. "This Mad Waldo of yours really is crazy, Hedge."

"Now wait a minute," you say. "Waldo wouldn't do anything to endanger his own life, so maybe he never had any trouble getting past these toads. And if he didn't, we shouldn't, either."

"True," Sparks admits thoughtfully. "You know, Hedge, these toads might be people that Carlynn's transformed, just like she did Pebo. We could use your coin to find out and—and then if they really are people, I could try talking to them. I have a spell that would let me do that."

"Now you're talking, Sparks. C'mon."

You lead Springer and Sparks to the doorway and reach into your pocket for your magic coin—only to find the gold ring you had seen in Waldo's treasure chest.

"That old coot took my coin and left me this ring!" you exclaim softly. "What are we going to do?"

"First, put the ring on," says Sparks. "If there's anything magic about it, we'll find out soon enough."

"Okay," you say, slipping the ring on your thumb. But nothing happens. "Now what?"

"I . . . I could try my spell."

"My dear, what do we do if the toads are really toads?" asks Springer. "I've never known one of them to be especially friendly."

"Good point," you say. "There are a lot of places along the walls of that cavern to hide. We could try sneaking past them."

"But, Hedge, if they're not really toads, they might be willing to help us, and we can use all the help we can get now that your coin is gone," Sparks argues.

Another good point. What will you do?

1) If you want to try talking to the toads in the hope they are really people Carlynn has transformed, turn to page 112.

2) If you prefer to try sneaking past the giant toads, turn to page 42.

You've known Waldo for some time, but, considering the circumstances, you approach his cave with more caution than usual.

"Looks empty," Sparks whispers.

"With old Waldo, you can never tell, my dear," says Springer, riding on your shoulder.

"Right," you agree. "You'd both better stay sharp and stay close."

With Sparks on your heels, you enter Waldo's cave. You take two or three steps, and suddenly, a rope tightens around your ankles. The next thing you know, both you and Sparks are hanging upside-down from the ceiling, Springer is heading for a safer perch, and a high-pitched voice is echoing through the cave.

"Yippee! Got 'em! Got 'em! Got 'em!"

"Waldo?" Sparks asks.

You roll your eyes sky-, uh, floorward, and nod.

A small, very hairy fellow dances into sight below you, chanting, "Got 'em! Got 'em! Got 'em!" But when he sees you, he stops short and brushes his hair back from his face for a better look. "Hey! You're not squirrels," he complains.

"Right, Waldo. We're not squirrels."

"Then get outta my trap right now. It's for SQUIRRELS ONLY! See?"

"Waldo! It's me—Hedge!"

Squinting at you again, he says, "So it is. Then you oughtta know I don't cotton to folks playin' around in my traps."

"Waldo, I'm not playing. I'm caught. Let us

down, will you?"

"Caught? Oh! So you are." Untying the two ropes from their pegs on the wall, the old hermit lets go of them. "Not caught anymore!"

"Waldo!" but your cry is too late. You and Sparks drop from the ceiling, landing with painful thuds.

"Now, whatcha doin' here, Hedge? And who's your friend?"

"Tell you what," you say, standing slowly and relieved to find nothing broken, "let us stay here tonight, and we'll tell you the whole story. It's a good one."

Shifting his eyes to Sparks, the hermit moves up close to you, points a thumb at the cleric, and says, "He stayin', too?"

"Yes, he's stayin', too."

"YIPPEE! A party! Party! Party! Party!"

As Waldo dances away into another chamber, Sparks fixes you with a questioning stare.

You just grin and shrug.

It's not long before both your dinner and your story are finished, and it's clear that Waldo is definitely an ally.

"Won't stand for nobody foolin' around in my forest like that," the hermit says, shaking his head. "Turnin' Pebo into a lizard, indeed! You gotta put a stop to that witch 'n' her shenanigans once 'n' for all!"

"That's the plan," you say, "but how are we going to manage it?"

"Could use some help, eh? Well, you've come

to the right place. Follow me."

You and Sparks and Springer exchange skeptical looks, but you follow Waldo to the far end of the cave.

"That," Waldo says, pointing proudly, "is your way into the castle without the witch knowing."

Bending over to peer into a small tunnel, you ask, "That hole? C'mon, Waldo. This is no time for jokes!"

"Jokes!" Waldo exclaims. "Just you looky here!" And in a second, he's dug a small chest out from under a pile of old animal skins and is waving it under your nose. "Got all this treasure from her castle right through that hole."

When the hermit opens the chest, you can see that his "treasure" consists of a few silver buttons, some bits of fur trim, and a considerable number of teaspoons.

"Waldo," you protest, "this stuff could've come from anywhere!"

"No, it couldn't," says Sparks. "Hedge, look at these spoons. They're all marked with Carlynn's crest."

On closer inspection, you see that each spoon does, indeed, have an elaborate C etched into its handle, and some of the buttons have the same mark, as well. But what really catches your eye is a small gold ring lying on the very bottom of the chest.

You barely move your hand toward it, however, when Waldo snaps the lid shut.

"You two can use my tunnel first thing in the

morning," says the hermit. "But tonight, you keep old Waldo company. Okay?"

"Okay," you agree, knowing this is part Waldo's game.

For several hours, you sing songs and listen to his stories—but all the while, your thoughts keep turning to that gold ring.

Even after Waldo has decided his party is over and everyone has gone to bed, you lie awake wondering if Waldo's ring might have some sort of magic that would help you and Sparks free Glorwillam.

You could, of course, wake Sparks and get him to help see if the coin could detect any magic about the ring. But what would Waldo do if he caught you? He might not do anything, then again . . .

1) Your curiosity is too great to wait till morning. Turn to page 113.

2) Wary about upsetting Waldo, you decide to stay put for the night. Turn to page 85.

"Okay, what do you suggest?" you ask the elf. "We haven't got a hope of winning a fight, and it's too dangerous to run—the hobgoblins would hear us."

"You needn't do either," says Wynn. "Just take cover and wait for them to pass."

"What kind of plan is that?" you exclaim. "We'll all get killed!"

"Hush!" the elf warns. "Find a place to hide, and leave the rest to me. Quickly!"

"Oh, Hedge," Sparks moans, "I don't think I can do that. I—I—"

"Shhh," you hiss, shoving him into a thicket. "Do what she says, and don't you dare move a single muscle."

Turning away from the cleric, you see Wynn scramble up a nearby tree, then disappear as she draws her cloak around her. After that, you have only time enough to find a hiding place for yourself before the hobgoblins come thundering into your camp.

After trampling all over the area and finally accepting that you're gone, one of the hairy, red-faced creatures complains, "Kav, we march all night. Want to rest."

"Worthless insect!" the hobgoblin leader says, whacking the guard across the top of his head. "Mistress commands we find boys—not sit."

"But Bok right. Need to sit," says another as he plops down much too close to Sparks's hiding place. "Need food, too. Hungry."

"Hey, ugly!" you suddenly hear your own

voice shouting from somewhere out in the forest. "What's the matter? Two boys got you beat already?"

Startled as you are, you're relieved to see the hobgoblins jump up and dash off in the direction of your voice.

"Very nice, my dear," says Springer as she lights on your shoulder. "I didn't know you were so talented."

"Give me a break, bird," you snap. "You know I'm not. It must've been the elf."

"Say," Springer says, taking a quick look around, "where is the elf, anyway?"

"Here," says Wynn as she suddenly reappears beside you. "My Cloak of Invisibility comes in handy, does it not? And so do spells of ventriloquism and mimicry, but the hobgoblins will soon realize they have been tricked and will return. You must make your escape quickly."

"Right," you say. "It's just too bad we can't sprout wings and fly out of here."

"Oh, we could do that!" Sparks says enthusiastically. "It's one of my better spells."

"What?"

"Oh," says Sparks, startled at his own enthusiasm, "I—I don't mean I can give us all wings, but . . . but I can make Springer big enough for us to ride on."

"Sparks! Why didn't you say so before?"

"I—I didn't think of it."

Fighting a strong desire to throttle the cleric, you say, "Well, now that you've thought of it, do

it before the hobgoblins come back, will you?"

"Hey! Don't I have any say in this?" Springer squawks. "It's me you want to ride."

"No, you don't. Just shut up and hold still," you tell her firmly.

"So I can be roasted alive by some spell gone wrong? Never! Remember, we're old friends! You can't make me! WAAAWK!!!"

"Too late for complaints, Mistress Hawk." The elf laughs as she watches the growing bird drop from the branch that will no longer hold her. "Unless I am mistaken, the cleric has cast a growth spell that will soon make you a size fit to carry both your master and the cleric well away from the dangers here."

"But what about you?" you ask. "Can't Springer carry you, too?"

"The good bird is not that large," Wynn replies, "but you needn't fear for me. My own spell of flying will take me wherever I wish to go."

"Then come with us," you suggest. "We'll go straight to Carlynn's castle. If your brother's anywhere around here, he's there."

Please turn to page 48.

"Sparks," you say, "try your spell."

With a nod, the cleric begins, and soon he and the toads are carrying on a conversation.

"What's up?" you finally ask.

"They're fighters, Hedge, and . . . and they want to help us. In fact, they *insist* on it. They say they'll get us into the castle, then take care of Carlynn's guards while we head for the Great Hall."

The offer sounds good, but the part about *insist*ing on helping you makes you uneasy. And so does the fact that the huge toads are edging closer.

"I'm not sure we can trust them," you mutter to Sparks.

"Hedge, these guys are waiting for an answer," Sparks warns. "You'd better make up your mind."

Your hand slips to your sword. They could be fighters impatient to hear your decision, or hungry toads getting ready to attack—you can't tell which. But Sparks is right. You have to decide now.

1) You say, "They're our best chance of getting into the castle. Let's go with them." Turn to page 116.

2) You say, "Get ready, Sparks. I think they're going to attack!" Turn to page 97.

"Can't hurt just to take look," you decide. Crawling over to Sparks, you shake him awake and point to where the chest is hidden.

Sparks nods, and together you creep over to the pile of old skins.

You open the chest quietly and find the ring. Then you dig the coin out of your pocket.

"Whatcha doin'?" you suddenly hear Waldo shout. "Ain't it enough I showed ya my secret tunnel? Ya gotta steal my treasure, too?"

Dropping your coin, you turn to find Waldo standing behind you.

His eyes flash with anger as he picks up an old wand and points it at you. "Repayin' my hospitality with stealin', are ya?"

Before you can say a word, you feel your skin begin to loosen and your joints grow stiff. Looking down at your wrinkling, gnarling hands, you realize are turning into an old man!

"Waldo," you rasp in a strange, crackling voice, "we don't want your treasure. We only wanted to see if the ring is magic."

But it's too late to stop the spell Waldo's wand has cast on you. You can feel in your aching old bones that you have only enough time to prepare yourself for the fate that should not have been yours for many years to come.

THE END

Convinced that you'll have to risk using the coin so you can figure out what to do next, you gather your courage and take hold of Sparks with one hand. With the other you reach into your pocket and touch the coin.

❖ *Turn to page 16 to see what the coin reveals about Carlynn and the elf.*

To make matters worse, you've used the coin with the elf's help. She knows that you're helpless for a moment!

Like a cat, she springs at you, grabbing for the golden sphere you hold in your hands.

Just as quickly, Springer dives at you, snatches the globe in her strong talons, and drops it at the feet of the real Carlynn.

With an angry shriek, the elf you now know as Jenna draws herself up and, in a swirl of crimson smoke, begins to change into the red dragon.

"Quickly, Hedge!" Carlynn shouts. "The pendant around her neck! Get the crystal!"

No longer under the coin's control, you draw your sword and lunge for the transforming sorceress while, out of the corner of your eye, you see Sparks making the gestures of a magic spell while Carlynn fits the orb onto the broken top of her staff.

You reach out and put your hand on the crystal. It burns like fire!

You try to pull your hand away, but you can't let go!

The half-woman/half-dragon looks you in the eye and laughs. Then she spits out a stream of fire.

Certain you'll be burned to a crisp, you close your eyes just as sparks start exploding all around you.

Weeks later, as you lie under a tree watching your hawk trace circles in the sky, you thank your lucky stars for the timid little cleric and the real sorceress, Carlynn.

Without Sparks's Scroll of Protection, your injuries from the dragon's fire would have been far worse. And if Carlynn had not used her Staff of Power to help you, you would never have had the strength to wrench the crystal away from the witch, Jenna.

"Hey, kid!" Pebo calls from his hut. "Are you going to lie there all day, or are you going to get on with your lessons? One adventure does not a ranger make, you know!"

You sit up and wave to Pebo. It sure is good to see him as a man again. It's even better to know *you* were part of getting him that way, of freeing everyone else in Trymn and Halstyn from lives as lizards and hedgehogs, and of helping Sparks rescue his master, Glorwillam.

With a satisfied smile, you stand up and call out, "Give me a break, will you, Pebo? I'm coming!"

THE END

The moment you and your band of toads appear in the guardroom of Carlynn's castle, you are set upon by a platoon of bugbears.

Though it soon becomes clear that these shambling monsters are no match for your giant toads, the noise of your battle quickly draws more guards from all over the castle—guards that are more than an even match for the toads.

Orcs appear, too, and hobgoblins, and other monsters you don't even recognize. But to your amazement, all of them get so involved fighting the giant invaders they find in the guardroom that they don't even notice the ranger, cleric, and hawk who came with them.

You signal for Springer to follow you, then you grab Sparks by the arm and pull him away from the battle and begin running down a hallway.

"All right," you pant when you're finally far enough away so that you can barely hear the fighting, "it's up to you now, Sparks. Lead the way to Glorwillam."

For a moment, Sparks looks a little confused. "I . . . we weren't in this part of the castle when I came with Glorwillam," he whispers as he turns around twice, trying to get his bearings in the dark hallway, "but I know the Great Hall was near the front entrance, and the front entrance was facing south."

"No problem," you say pointing down the corridor ahead of you. "South is that way."

"It is?" the cleric asks, frowning skeptically. "How do you know?"

"Hey! I'm a ranger, aren't I?" you answer. "I'm supposed to be able to track and scout without getting myself lost. Just take my word for it—that way is south."

The cleric shrugs. "Okay, okay."

Quietly and cautiously, he leads you and Springer down the dark corridor until it turns to the left. There, you stop him and signal him to stay back while you move up to take a look around the corner.

"There's an open set of double doors down at the end of this corridor," you whisper.

"Is there a crest over the doors? One like we saw on the spoons in Waldo's treasure chest?" Sparks asks.

You take another look down the hallway. "Sure is," you reply.

"Then we've found it!" the cleric says excitedly. "That's the Great Hall!"

"Shhh!" Springer suddenly warns.

"What's the matter?" you ask.

"I don't know," the hawk replies. "I thought I heard something."

For a long minute, all three of you hold your breath and listen.

"I guess I was mistaken," Springer finally says. "But I could've sworn . . . "

"It's just your nerves," you say, hoping you're right. "C'mon, let's go."

When you reach the doors to the Great Hall, you all stop a moment to take a look at what lies ahead of you.

Carlynn's Great Hall is a long, dark room, heavily carpeted and filled with a great many marble statues on pedestals. At the far end, you can see the dim outline of a large, high-backed chair that you assume is Carlynn's throne.

"So now what?" you ask Sparks.

"The Mirror-of-Life Trapping that holds Glorwillam is covered by a curtain just behind her throne," the cleric replies. "We have to break the mirror to set him free. But we can't look in the mirror, or we'll become trapped, too."

"Piece of cake," you say, not sure you believe that yourself.

"Hedge," Springer says quietly from your shoulder. "My dear, do you remember when I thought I heard something a little while ago? Well, I was right. I *did* hear something. Turn around and take a look, but please do it slowly."

Following the hawk's instructions, both you and Sparks turn—and see a huge black panther coming down the corridor toward you. Its unhurried steps are easy and deliberate, and its shoulders are hunched up as if preparing to spring. Its lips are drawn back over its sharp fangs. Its eyes are fixed straight ahead—right on you!

"Back up slowly into the Hall," commands Springer. "Don't make any sudden movements."

Heart pounding, you move backward into the Great Hall with Springer on your shoulder and Sparks beside you.

Step after cautious step takes you deeper and deeper into the room, but it doesn't take you any farther away from the panther. Step by deliberate step, it keeps on coming.

"We need help, Sparks," you whisper. "Neither of us can fight that cat. We've got to get to Glorwillam."

The cleric takes a deep breath. Then, as confidently as you've ever heard him, he says, "You go on ahead and do what needs to be done. I'll hold the panther here with a charm spell."

"Go on ahead?" you repeat, startled but never taking your eyes off the approaching panther. "Not a chance, Sparks. I'm not going to leave you here alone. Your spells don't always—"

"Hey! I'm a cleric, aren't I?" Sparks replies. "I'm supposed to be able to cast spells. Just take my word for it, Hedge. I'll hold the panther here."

"Okay!" you say, signaling Springer to stay with the cleric, just in case. You continue moving backward as Springer leaps to the cleric's shoulder. Sparks stops and begins chanting a spell.

Quite soon, you are able to turn and move on at a run, for Sparks really does do exactly what he promised. He stops the cat with his spell.

Not quite sure how long the spell will work, you waste no time in making your way past Carlynn's throne. Once you've gotten that far, however, you stop, for you suddenly realize you're facing not one curtain, but two—one on your right and one on your left.

You know Sparks would be able to tell you

which curtain hides the mirror, but you also know you dare not disturb his concentration.

"Which one?" you wonder as you stare at the two curtains. "Which hides the mirror and Glorwillam?"

At the risk of giving your presence away, you can try calling to Glorwillam in the hope that he will be able to answer you and lead you to the right curtain. Or you can smash something heavy against both curtains, chancing that you won't release anything dangerous from behind the wrong curtain.

1) If you call to Glorwillam, turn to page 98.

2) If you want to smash at both curtains, turn to page 94.

"I don't know," you say with a frown. "We came to free Glorwillam, so maybe we'd best stick with that. Golden orb, take us to him."

At once, the room begins to spin, and when it stops, you and Sparks are in a huge hall. Sitting on a throne in front of you is a very lovely young woman. Her hair is long and red, and she is dressed in fine robes with symbols of sorcery on them. On the wall behind the throne is a curtain.

"The Mirror-of-Life Trapping is behind that curtain," Sparks whispers hurriedly.

"The orb!" the woman exclaims as she spots the golden sphere in your hand. "Give it to me!" She rises and advances toward you.

"What? This old thing?" you say, juggling the golden sphere from one hand to the other. "I don't think so. I think I'd rather let my friend have it. Heads up, Sparks!"

You throw the globe to the cleric, hoping he will understand—and apparently he does, for he catches it, then waits until you move closer to the mirror before he hurls it back.

The witch is so intent on possessing the globe that you keep her playing your game of keep-away until you are in just the right position. Then you signal Sparks, and he throws the heavy ball at you with all his strength.

This time, instead of catching it, you duck and let the heavy globe whiz past you.

It strikes the curtain. There's a thud, then the sound of broken glass falling to the floor. A deep male voice begins a strange-sounding chant, and

the witch lets out an angry shriek. You see her back away, a look of terror on her face. Then she stands frozen by the magic of a spell as an old, bearded cleric emerges from behind the curtain.

"We did it, Hedge!" Sparks shouts. "It's Glorwillam! He's free! We stopped the witch!"

"Not quite yet. There are still one or two loose ends to be tied up—this crystal, for instance," the older cleric says as he strides over and yanks a pendant off the witch. "There! Your mistress will be glad to have this back, I'm sure."

"And this, too," you say, picking the globe up from among the pieces of broken glass.

"Yes," says Glorwillam. "Thanks to you, the real Carlynn will soon be found and freed. Your quest has been fulfilled."

"Begging your pardon," you reply, "but like you said, there are still a few loose ends. You see, there's a chameleon that needs changing back into a ranger and—"

Glorwillam laughs as he puts an arm around your shoulder. "Never fear. Your reward shall be that and more."

"*More*?" you ask. And daydreams begin to dance in your head.

THE END

"I guess Waldo really is mad," you say. "But at least he gave us a safe place to sleep for a while."

"Does that mean you're opting for the forest route, my dear?" asks Springer.

"Yep. C'mon, Sparks. You lead—you're the one who's been to the castle before."

And lead the way the cleric does, with a new confidence. But soon you realize that if you *are* nearing the castle, your stumbling through the moonlight could alert Carlynn's minions.

"I don't know about you two," you say, "but I think we should camp for the rest of the night."

"But is it safe?" asks the cleric, sounding timid again.

Please turn to page 126.

As you cry, "Springer! Sparks! I'm coming!" you see the panther spring through the air toward you.

You leap aside, out of the cat's way, but you follow it with your eyes as it soars by.

You see it just barely miss hitting the wall behind you. Its claws catch on one of the curtains.

You watch the curtain rip in half as the cat's heavy body pulls it to the floor. A large mirror is revealed.

You see an old man in the mirror.

You see *yourself.*

Suddenly, everything around you grows cold and dark. The next thing you know, you're standing *inside* the mirror, next to another old man that must be the Patriarch Glorwillam.

You shake your head in dismay, just hoping that your friends, with the toads' help, will be able to defeat Carlynn's guards and come to free you.

THE END

"Maybe if we make a good ranger's camp, we'll be safe enough here," you say.

"Ranger's camp?" the cleric asks. "What's that?"

"The definition of 'uncomfortable,' my dear," Springer replies. "First of all, it'll be dark and cold because we won't have a fire—"

"So no one will be able to spot us from a distance," you interrupt.

"Then it'll be hard to sleep because we can't even gather up leaves to lie on—"

"So we can take off without leaving a trace if we have to," you interrupt again.

"But that doesn't really matter because Hedge will have us sitting up the rest of the night keeping watch—"

"Look, bird!" you snap angrily. "It's the best we can do under the circumstances—unless, of course, you want Sparks to put a spell around us."

"A spell? What—what kind of spell?" the cleric asks. "I—I don't know—"

"On second thought, Hedge," Springer says quickly, "you might be right. A good ranger's camp should do quite nicely."

"Fine," you say. "Then let's have a bite to eat. After that, you two can get some rest. I think I'd best keep watch myself."

Even though you're confident you have taken every precaution possible, you're still surprised just before dawn by a quiet voice whispering very close to your ear.

"Ho! Ranger! Danger is close at hand but not yet upon you. Stand fast. I am here to lend my aid."

Immediately, you reach for your sword and spin around toward the voice. But you can't see anyone, so, loud enough to wake your companions, you ask, "Who are you? If you're a friend, let me see you."

At once, Springer and Sparks are awake and ready to back you, but it soon becomes all too clear that would be useless. The next time you hear the voice, it comes from behind you again.

"Put up your weapons and listen!"

Whirling around, you see an elven woman, a warrior in full armor, standing there, her longbow nocked and ready but not drawn.

"I am Wynn," she says quickly and quietly. "I am come to find my brother, whose party disappeared in this area some months ago. I bring you warning of hobgoblins fast approaching, and I offer you my aid."

"Hobgoblins! How many?"

"Who cares?" Springer says. "One is one too many."

"The hawk speaks wisely," Wynn whispers. "You must move quickly."

You want to trust the elf, especially since you can already hear something clumsy approaching, but you are uneasy about being rushed. After all, the elf isn't someone you know, and Sparks has already warned you about Carlynn's ability to change shapes.

You know you could find out if the elf is telling the truth by using your coin and Sparks's ability to see through spells and lies. But you also know that while the coin's magic is working, both you and the cleric would be defenseless.

1) You're willing to trust the elf and accept her offer of aid, no questions asked. Turn to page 109.

2) You feel you must use your magic coin before you accept the elf's offer. Turn to the next page and use the Crimson Crystal to see what you learn; then turn to page 25.

"I don't think I trust the lizard men or their magic horn," you say. "And I'm not too keen on getting mixed up with the guards if there's any other choice. Besides, even if we do try to sneak in with them, we still need to know where 'in' is. C'mon, Sparks. Give me your hand."

Reluctantly, the cleric does as you ask, and the coin's magic begins. One moment you can see the castle just as it appears, and with your trained ranger's eye, you take careful note of its every detail. The next moment, the cleric's ability to see through magic lets you see through Carlynn's illusion.

❖ *Look at the picture on the previous page and then use the Crimson Crystal to see what you and Sparks see this time.*

"Carlynn's magic must be awfully strong," you say. "I didn't get a very clear image, did you, Sparks?"

"No, but I saw enough," the cleric answers. "That gate's not only too heavy to break through, it's probably magically locked as well. And don't look at me like that—I haven't got any spells strong enough to dispell Carlynn's. I still think our best hope is to try that horn."

"Or the side door," you remind him.

"Side door?" asks Pebo.

"It's behind the hibiscus bush along the east wall," you say. "It doesn't look used much, and it isn't barred or gated."

"Well, my dears, that does add to our list of options, doesn't it? We can use the horn, try to sneak into the castle with the guards, or try that side door."

You're slightly annoyed at the hawk's habit of putting things so clearly, but you know those are exactly the choices you have—and you can tell from the way the others are looking at you that you're going to have to make the choice.

1) If you decide to try to sneak in with the castle guards, turn to page 86.

2) If you want to try the side door, turn to page 78.

3) If you think the lizard men's horn will be helpful, turn to page 75.

"Sparks," you say, "you saw how Pebo and Springer came through for us before. If we try to break out of here, we could mess up any rescue plans they have. We're safe enough for now. Let's just give them a few hours before we do anything on our own."

Sparks reluctantly agrees and starts pacing restlessly while you take another long look around your cell.

It's a pretty dismal place—all stone, no windows, and only a smelly old pile of straw to rest on. But since it's all you've got, you kneel down and start to spread the straw out to make room enough for the two of you. Your hand touches something round hidden beneath the straw. You pull out a golden sphere.

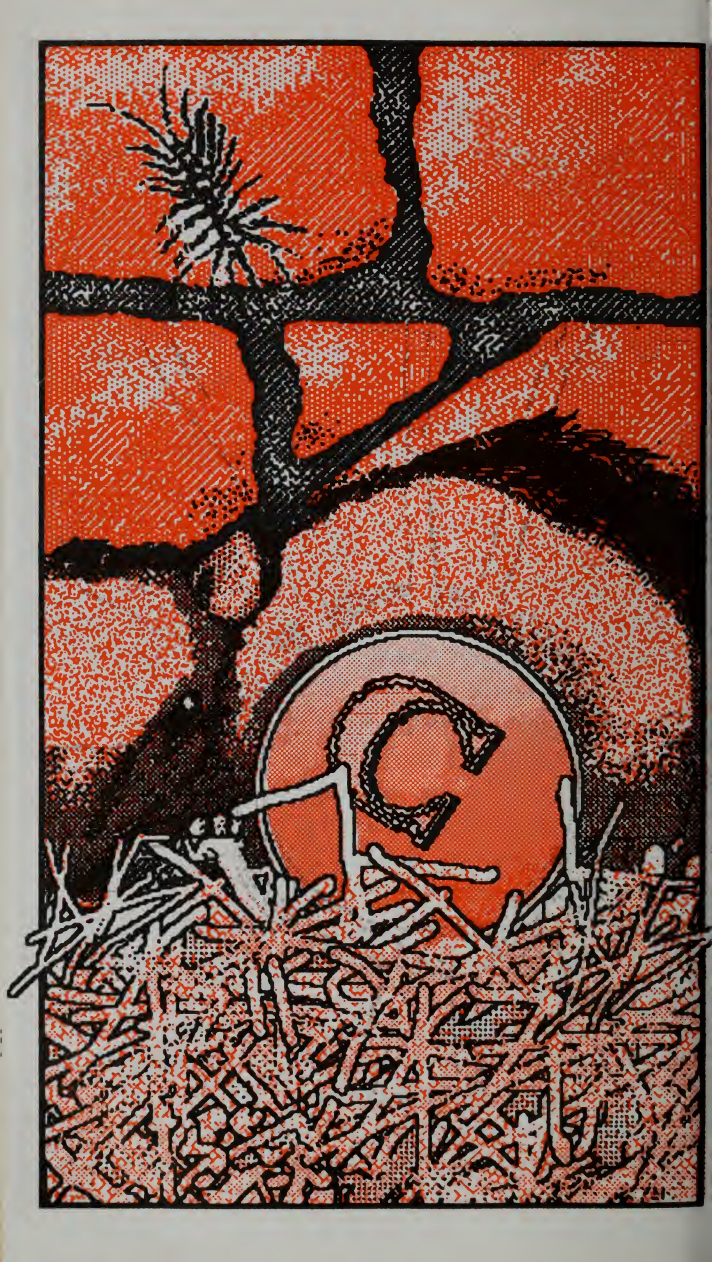
"Sparks! Look at this!"

As the cleric examines the beautiful metal orb you hold in your hand, he says, "It must've been part of a scepter, or maybe the top of a staff. Look! Here's the place where it was broken off. And—and, Hedge, it has Carlynn's crest on it." His voice drops to a whisper.

You hold the globe as carefully as if you expect it to explode any second. "What do you suppose it's doing here?"

All at once, the globe seems to come to life in your hands. It glows and vibrates. Then it asks, "Do you ask a question of me?"

You almost drop the orb, but Sparks holds your hand steady, and he gestures urgently for you to answer.


C

"Yes," you say nervously.

The orb vibrates again as it replies, "I came here with my true mistress, but she broke me away from the staff, lest our powers should fall into the imposter's hands. It is my fate to stay hidden here until someone who could return me to my mistress and restore the Staff of Power shall find me."

Then the orb dims and lies still again, just a metal ball in your hands.

"If what this thing says is true," you whisper excitedly, "we're not up against Carlynn at all! It's some other witch trying to take her place!"

Sparks nods. "That's what it sounds like, all right. It also sounds like the globe expects us to do something about it."

That's exactly what you were afraid the cleric would say. You set the globe down and shake your head. "Sparks, how can we trust anything we find around here, especially if it's magic?" You pause and then ask, "Do you think if we used the coin, we could tell if this thing's good magic or bad magic?"

"It can't hurt to try," Sparks replies. "The coin has worked for us so far."

❖ *Turn to the previous page and study the orb with the Crimson Crystal to see if you can discover whether it is good or evil.*

Finally you say, "There was a clear aura around the globe, Sparks. Is that good or bad?"

The cleric frowns. "Good, I think."

"So now what?" you ask.

"Pick it up again and ask it how we can restore it to its rightful owner."

You find the vibration and light alarming, but you carefully pick up the orb and say, "We haven't got the strength or skills others have, but we're willing to help. What can we do?"

Again, the globe begins to vibrate. "Your touch tells me many things, Ranger. It tells me of your quest and of all you have experienced to fulfill it. Yet, though it is a noble quest and not unlike my own, your way to reach its end differs from mine, so I offer you the choice: I can take you and your companion to my mistress, or I can take you to the cleric's master. The decision is yours."

1) If you wish to let the orb take you to the real Carlynn, turn to page 139.

2) If you feel you should have the orb take you to Glorwillam and let him solve the problem of Carlynn, turn to page 122.

"Okay, golden orb, take us to your mistress," you say. At once, the room begins to spin.

When it stops, you're still in a cell, but it's not the one you were in before. This one has a small cot in it, along with a table holding a single, flickering candle.

"The globe did take us someplace, Sparks," you whisper. "Where do you think—"

The feel of Sparks's hand on your arm and his nod toward a dark corner stops you short. Peering through the dim light, you see a shadow move, and you realize that someone's in the cell with you.

Your mouth is suddenly very dry, and your voice quavers. "Wh-Who's there?"

"Mistress of the Staff of Power," a frail voice replies, and a very thin, old woman steps toward you. Her clothes hang on her much too loosely, as if they belong on a different body, and her hair is uncombed, wreathing her wrinkled face like a silver halo. She leans heavily on a staff.

"Carlynn?" you whisper.

The woman nods. "And you are Hedge and Kor-Kiran."

"How—how did you know?"

The sorceress laughs softly. "Some powers can be stolen, and some cannot."

"Then the Carlynn we're after isn't the real one!" you exclaim.

"No," says Carlynn. "She's my apprentice, Jenna. A greedy witch of a girl with little patience, even less wisdom, and a great desire for

power. Let me restore my staff, and I shall show you the true Carlynn."

You hesitate. Would a witch tell the truth? Then, deciding that the only way to find out is to use your coin and the cleric's ability to see through lies, you quietly reach into your pocket as you place your hand on Sparks's shoulder.

❖ *Turn to the next page to see what the magic coin reveals about whether or not the old woman is telling you the truth.*

Satisfied the clear aura you saw around the woman indicates that she's telling you the truth, you fit the orb's broken stem onto the splintered top of her staff.

The instant the two pieces touch, the globe begins to glow, getting brighter and brighter, until you have to close your eyes.

Then the light fades and you dare look again. The old woman is gone, and in her place is the lovely, dark-haired woman you saw when you used your coin.

"The Staff of Power is whole again," she says. "To you shall be granted any reward you claim, Ranger. But first . . . "

Carlynn closes her eyes, and as she begins to chant softly, a pink glow forms around the Staff. Gradually, the glow becomes a swirling mist, then it takes on the form of a young, red-haired woman.

"Carlynn!" the newcomer cries, half in fear, half in surprise.

"Yes, Jenna. Now, my crystal, if you will. It no longer holds any power for you."

As the imposter slowly removes a pendant from around her neck, it seems as though her beauty and her self-assurance begin to fade. "What will you do with me, Mistress?" she asks fearfully.

Carlynn begins to move her hands in circling motions as she says, "A mountaintop, I think. Somewhere alone and quiet where you can think, and perhaps come to realize that power without wisdom is no power at all."

Jenna disappears in a swirl of pink mist, and you, Sparks, and Carlynn are alone.

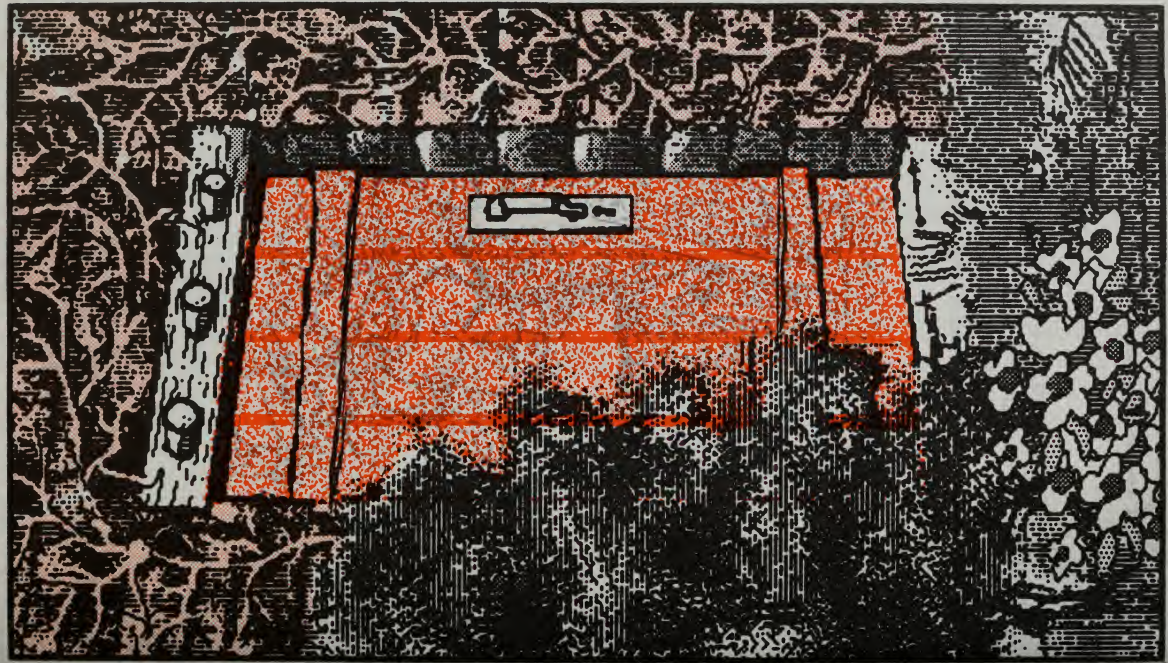
Carlynn shakes her head. "It is unfortunate this lesson had to be learned at the expense of so many others. It will take a great deal of doing to set things aright."

"Uh, Carlynn," you say, "could you start that now, as part of my reward, I mean."

Carlynn smiles at you warmly. "What would you have, my young liberator? Gems? Gold?"

Blushing, you say, "Well, actually, I had something else in mind. You see, there's a chameleon around here somewhere . . . "

THE END



ENDLESS QUEST® Books

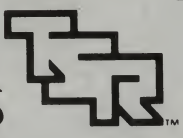
From the Producers of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Game

Experience all the thrills and excitement of your favorite role-playing game from TSR, Inc., in the pages of these exciting books. YOU are the hero, and only YOU can make the decisions that lead your adventure to success—or disaster!

Watch for these exciting new adventures, available SOON at better bookstores and hobby stores everywhere!

MYSTERY OF THE ANCIENTS
TOWER OF DARKNESS

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, ENDLESS QUEST and the TSR logo are registered trademarks owned by TSR, Inc. ©1984 TSR, Inc. All Rights Reserved.



For a free catalog, write
TSR, Inc.
P.O. Box 756, Dept. EQB
Lake Geneva, WI 53147

From the Producers of the
DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Game

PICK A PATH TO ADVENTURE™

STOP THAT WITCH

Your training as a ranger hasn't quite prepared you for the day you return to your village and find all the inhabitants turned into lizards by a mysterious red dragon.

In your quest to regain your friends, you have the help of a magic coin you found that lets you see through the eyes of others. Using it with your hawk companion makes your vision keener. But it takes the special powers of the strange apprentice cleric you call Sparks to see you through the magical dangers involved in trying to stop the trouble caused by the evil sorceress, Carlynn.

All ENDLESS QUEST® books allow **you** to make the decisions. You choose the paths to follow. But CRIMSON CRYSTAL™ Adventures offer something more—a unique way of finding clues to lead you along the right path—you hope. To see how this magic works, turn to page 1 and start reading.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS and ENDLESS QUEST are registered trademarks owned by TSR, Inc. "TM" designates all other trademarks owned by TSR, Inc. ©1985 TSR, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

In the UK £1.95 net
ISBN 394-74241-9
0-88038-251-1 8930